

On the Road to Global Labour History

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On the Road to Global Labour History

A Festschrift for Marcel van der Linden

Edited by

Karl Heinz Roth

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Ben Lewis



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Preface

Global Labour History is a latecomer to historical science. While the origins of global historiography in general date back to the early twentieth century, its line of research focussed on the working classes only emerged in the 1990s. This is a paradox in two respects. First, it is astounding that workers, as key actors and objects in the capitalist world system, had been ostracised from historical discourse for so long. On the other hand, the new scientific discipline that is global labour history developed in a historical constellation which was shaped by the decline of the former representations of the working class. As a result, labour historiography was considered to be obsolete.

In this situation, a small group of researchers at the International Institute of Social History seized the initiative and established a new global history of the working classes. In so doing, they had to overcome numerous paradigms which stood in the way of their discovery of new frontiers: methodological nationalism, constricted Euro- and Atlantocentric outlooks and a one-sided focus on the sections of the working class who are dually free wage workers. Beyond these enclosures it was then possible for the researchers in Amsterdam to begin exploring and mapping out Global Labour History.

Marcel van der Linden soon became one of the instigators behind the Amsterdam team which discovered these new shores. He was present at the main intersections of the emerging discipline. He committed himself to freeing the concept of labour from the confines of Marxist orthodoxy. He organised the survey of existing empirical knowledge on global labour relations and participated in exploring and consolidating new research fields. In this way he succeeded in dealing with all historical and contemporary manifestations of human labour on equal terms and traced their transcontinental interactions back to the sixteenth century.

All this did not happen in the silence of a few study rooms, however. The globally oriented research discipline had to simultaneously be organised across the globe. Beginning with the Institute in Amsterdam, a world-wide network was formed in which labour historians from all continents and cultures can now communicate with each other and exchange research findings.

The following commemorative publication sees itself as a snapshot of this complex process. The publication has come into existence through the cooperation of authors who belong to Marcel's intellectual circle of friends and who have integrated themselves into the network of global labour historiography since the 1990s. In order to preserve the character of a snapshot, four thematic sections were chosen.

On the basis of four selected examples, the first section provides us with a view of the work of van der Linden the scientific organiser and networker. Karin Hofmeester reconstructs van der Linden's activity since joining the International Institute of Social History in the 1980s. Chitra Joshi, Prabhu Mohapatra and Rana Behal report on van der Linden's participation in the conceptualisation and establishment of the Association of Indian Labour Historians. David Mayer and Berthold Unfried summarise his role in reorienting the Conference of Labour and Social History, based in Austria, which had to be re-invented from scratch at the end of the Cold War. Angelika Ebbinghaus recalls the activities and impulses of a friend and adviser who gave counsel to the Foundation for Social History of the Twentieth Century – first in Hamburg and later in Bremen – and who stood by the Foundation in challenging times.

The second section gathers together field and case studies. This provides a view of Global Labour History's empirical fields of research, which have now become highly differentiated. Their geographical and historical contexts are spread over three continents: Latin America, the Middle East and East Asia. In this section, we wander with the authors across the globe from East to West from the sixteenth century through to today. Using the example of Spanish America, Michael Zeuske explores the centrality of systems of slavery and the slave trade for the capitalist world system's primitive accumulation. Rossana Barragán Romano has chosen Potosí, the centre of Spanish-American silver production, as her point of departure for a local historical study in order to show the impact of an organisation of labour based on traditional Inca methods on the world economy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The two case studies which follow this relate to a common region of the world, the Middle East, towards the end of World War II. Touraj Atabaki reconstructs and contextualises what is as of yet probably the most important workers' struggle in the history of Iran – the general strike of the Abadan oil workers in July 1946. On the other hand, Görkem Akgöz dedicates herself to the unspectacular and everyday labour disputes in a Turkish state-owned textile factory and, on the basis of workers' petitions, describes the arduous conditions which constitute workers' consciousness. We owe to Jenny Chan the concluding contribution to this section. Her analysis links recent labour conflicts in China to current developments in global labour relations. She too examines the mental constitutive processes of the Chinese workers in conditions where collective representation is absent, with the state pressing ahead with new efforts to regulate the conflicts and to stabilise the macroeconomic dynamics of development.

The third part of the anthology is devoted to the methodological problems of Global Labour History. It consists of four contributions which discuss labour history's historiographical tools, its conceptual classifications and its relations

with the critique of political economy. With reference to six examples from his own research practice, Peter Alexander points out how crucially important comparisons are in the development of global labour history. Comparison made it possible for him to situate the history of miners in South Africa in its international contexts and to understand the significance of administrative racism in the regulation of working conditions. Another of global labour historiography's important tools is its interdisciplinary approach. In his article, Dirk Hoerder describes how this interdisciplinary perspective evolved in the study of migrant labour. Astonishing methodological parallels become visible in his account: migration historians also had to first of all free themselves from nation-state centred and Atlantocentric outlooks before they were able to identify, and to present historiographically, the large and small regional, transcontinental and – not least – the transcultural migration systems of the working classes. By contrast, Christian De Vito directs his conceptualising focus to the dialectical relationship between labour flexibility and labour precariousness, referring in particular to his studies of convict labour. Not only are there various objective obstacles to the dispositifs of the companies and the state for controlling the conditions of the recruitment, allocation and exploitation of labour. These dispositifs are also restricted by the ability of the workers to perceive and to resist the conditions of their exploitation. The final chapter of this section deals with how, with the aid of political economy, the findings of global labour historiography should be conceptualised. Andrea Komlosy proposes to adjust the theory of value and surplus value to new empirical findings from labour historiography. This proposal aims to take into account all visible and invisible, paid, underpaid and non-paid components of value creation regarding worker households and value-creation chains and to collect these components under the generic term 'value transfer'.

The fourth and final part of the anthology reconstructs Marcel van der Linden's intellectual development. The path that led him to Global Labour History was by no means straightforward. Before he reached the home straight, he had to overcome many hurdles: for example, the doctrines of Orthodox Marxism and the deficits of the political and trade-union representations of the workers' movement with their fixation on the predominantly white, male and salaried segments of the working class. Counter to this, elements of self-organisation and proletarian survival strategies – such as the working-class household and the mutual societies – gradually became more significant for him, whilst on a third level this was joined by reflections on the persistence of the primitive accumulation of capitalist development and the significance of slavery. At the end of this long process came the conceptualisation of Global Labour History.

Not all readers are likely to have the necessary time at their disposal to work through this snapshot of Global Labour History systematically. I would therefore like to point out some alternative approaches to the volume which could satisfy different interests. Those who want to know about the addressee of this commemorative volume in particular would be well advised to read the first section and then to turn to the last contribution to this anthology, the intellectual biography. On the other hand, those who want to become acquainted with the empirical side of Global Labour History will get a good first representative overview by reading the field and case studies. But those who want to engage primarily with the methodological tools of Global Labour History will receive many stimulating ideas by reading the four essays in the section on methodology.

A few more words about the history of this anthology. It has emerged from a special edition of the *Zeitschrift Sozial. Geschichte Online/Social History Online*, which was published as a collection of mainly German-language essays in 2012. This publication included the contributions of Angelika Ebbinghaus, Dirk Hoerder, Andrea Komlosy, David Mayer and Berthold Unfried and Karl Heinz Roth. The contributions of Gökem Akgöz, Peter Alexander, Touraj Atabaki, Rossana Barragán, Rana Behal, Jenny Chan, Christian De Vito, Karin Hofmeester, Chitra Joshi, Prabhu Mohapatra and Michael Zeuske have been added to this English-language edition. They have significantly contributed to completing this snapshot of Global Labour History.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who made the completion of this project possible. The Foundation for Social History of the Twentieth Century provided the necessary funds. The recommendation of the Historical Materialism Book Series Editorial Board to expand the project thematically greatly contributed to its success. My special thanks go to the anthology's language editor, Ben Lewis, who translated all the German-language contributions into English.

Karl Heinz Roth
Bremen

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|--|
| AILH | Association of Indian Labour Historians |
| AGI | Archivo General de Indias [Sevilla] |
| AHN | Archivo Historico Nacional [Madrid] |
| AIOC | Anglo-Iranian Oil Company |
| ANPUH | Associação Nacional de História [Brazil] |
| APOC | Anglo-Persian Oil Company |
| BP | British Petroleum |
| B.P. | Benzin-e Pars [Petrol of Persia] |
| BRIC | Brazil, Russia, India, China [Country Group] |
| CCFTU | Central Council of Federated Trade Unions [of Iran] |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| Cf. | Carry forward |
| CP | Communist Party |
| CSIC | Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas |
| CCTU | Central Council of Trade Unions [of Iran] |
| DP | Democrat Party [Turkey] |
| Ed., Eds. | Editor, Editors |
| e.g. | for example |
| ELHN | European Labour History Network |
| ERC | European Research Council |
| ESSHC | European Social Science History Conference |
| EU | European Union |
| IALHI | International Association of Labour History Institutions |
| IISH | International Institute of Social History |
| IKB | Internationale Kommunisten Bond [Netherlands] |
| ILO | International Labour Office |
| IRSH | International Review of Social History |
| ISHA | International Social History Association |
| ITH | International Conference of Labour and Social History |
| IWMA | International Workingmen's Association |
| IWW | Industrial Workers of the World |
| JNU | Jawaharlal Nehru University |
| KUTV | Communist University of the East |
| MA, M.A. | Master of Arts |
| M.P. | Member of Parliament |
| NN | Anonymous Author |
| No. | Number |

| | |
|----------|---|
| NWO | Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek |
| p., pp. | page, pages |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PIEB | Programa de Investigaciones Estratégicas |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| RPP | Republican People's Party [Turkey] |
| SACOM | Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour |
| SfS | Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte |
| SISLav | Società Italiana di Storia del Lavoro |
| SSB | Socialistische Sociologen Bond |
| SUNY | State University of New York |
| TNA | The National Archive [Kew] |
| TUI | Trade Union of Iran |
| TV | Television |
| US, U.S. | United States |
| USA | United States of America |
| VOC | Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie |
| WWI | World War One / Great War |
| WWII | World War Two / Second World War |

Notes on Contributors

Görkem Akgöz

studied at the Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology in 2003. After she received her M.A. degree from SUNY Binghamton, Department of Sociology in 2005, she was awarded the Huygens scholarship to carry out archival research at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, where she stayed to write a dissertation under the supervision of Professor Marcel van der Linden. She holds a PhD from the University of Amsterdam. Her dissertation is entitled *Many Voices of a Turkish State Factory: Working at Bakırköy Cloth Factory, 1932–50*. She is currently a post-doc fellow at Re:Work and conducting research on factory histories in Europe.

Peter Alexander

is Professor of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg and South Africa Research Chair in Social Change. He has published numerous books and journal articles on comparative African labour history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the social structure of the labouring poor and on contemporary labour struggles in the South African mining industry. Recent Publications: *Voices from South Africa's Mining Massacre* (with Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell and Bongani Xezwi, 2013); *Class in Soweto* (with Claire-Ceruti, Keke Motseke, Mosa Phadi and Kim Wale, 2013); *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and A Case to Answer* (with Luke Sinwell, Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope and Bongani Xezwi, 2012); *Class, Subjectivity and Parochialism: A Reflection and an Introduction* (2010); *Rebellion of the Poor: South Africa's Service Delivery Protest – a Preliminary Analysis* (2010); *Labour Crossings in Eastern and Southern Africa* (with Phil Bonner, Jon Hyslop and Lucien van der Walt, 2009).

Touraj Atabaki

is Senior Research Fellow at the International Institute of Social History. He is President of the International Society of Iranian Studies and member or consulting member of a number of academic journals, including *International Labor and Working-Class History*.

Having first studied theoretical physics and then history, he has published many books and articles on the social history of Iran, Turkey and the former Soviet South. His latest publications are: 'Far from Home, But at Home: Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry', *Studies in History*, 31, 1; (with Kaveh Ehsani) 'Oil and Beyond: Expanding British Imperial Aspirations, Emer-

ging Oil Capitalism, and the Challenge of Social Questions in the First World War', in Helmut Bley and Anorthe Kremers (eds.) 2014, *The World During the First World War*, Essen: Klartext; editing the issue of 'Writing the Social History of Labor in the Iranian Oil Industry', for *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84; and 'From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and the Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84.

Rossana Barragán Romano

is currently the Head of the Latin American Desk at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. She was the Director of the Historical Archive of the department and city of La Paz until 2010. She also served for five years as director of the journal *Tinkazos* at the Program for Strategic Research (Programa de Investigaciones Estratégicas – PIEB – in Bolivia). She received her PhD from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris, and her Master's Degree from the University of Paris I (Panthéon Sorbonne). She has been Professor of History at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (La Paz) and at the Postgraduate School in Social Sciences of CIDES-La Paz. She has published several books and articles. Some of her most recent publications are *Mundos del Trabajo en Transformación: entre lo local y lo global* (Comp. 2014) and 'Ladrones, pequeños empresarios o trabajadores independientes? K'ajchas, trapiches y plata en el cerro de Potosí en el siglo XVIII' (*Revista Nuevo Mundo*, <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/67938>).

Rana P. Behal

taught history at Deshbandhu College, the University of Delhi between 1972 and 2014. He has also taught history at Cornell and Syracuse Universities and Oberlin College in the USA. He has been engaged in research and writing on Indian labour history. After completing his PhD from JNU he has held research Fellowships at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Cambridge University, IGK RE: Work at Humboldt University, Berlin and Centre of Development Studies, Geographic Sciences, Free University Berlin.

His research has been on the history of tea plantations and its labour force in Assam, North East India, during colonial rule. His publications include *One Hundred Years of Servitude: Political Economy of Tea Plantations in Colonial Assam* (2015) and various book chapters and essays in journals like *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Calcutta Historical Review*, *India*, *International Review of Social History*, *Journal of Peasant Studies* and *Modern Asian Studies*. He co-edited with Marcel van der Linden *India's Labouring Poor: Historical Studies c. 1600–c. 2000* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2007) and *Rethinking Work:*

Global Historical and Sociological Perspectives (2011) with Babacar Fall and Alice Mah.

Jenny Chan

(PhD in 2014) is an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Department of Applied Social Sciences at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Prior to joining PolyU, she was a Lecturer of Sociology and Contemporary China Studies at the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, and a Junior Research Fellow of Kellogg College, University of Oxford. She serves as an elected Board Member of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Labor Movements, an Editor of the *Global Labour Journal* and a Contributing Editor of the *Asia-Pacific Journal*. Financial support from the Hong Kong Research Grants Council's Early Career Scheme (ref 25602517) and the John Fell Oxford University Press Research Fund (ref 152/015) is gratefully acknowledged. She is co-author of *La machine est ton seigneur et ton maître* (with Yang and Xu Lizhi, Agone, 2015) and of *Dying for an iPhone* (with Ngai Pun and Mark Selden, Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming). Her email contacts: jenny.wl.chan@polyu.edu.hk / wlchan_cuhk@yahoo.com

Christian G. De Vito

is Research Associate at the University of Leicester and Honorary Fellow at the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam. He has published extensively on the history of punishment and psychiatry, global labour history, and social history, and his current research addresses convict labour and convict circulation in late-colonial and post-colonial Latin America (ca. 1760s–1898). He is co-chair of the Labour Network of the European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC) and co-coordinator of the working group on Free and Unfree Labour of the European Labour History Network (ELHN). He is member of the editorial boards of the International Social History Association (ISHA) newsletter and the *Società Italiana di Storia del Lavoro* (SISLAV), and co-edits the 'Work in Global and Historical Perspective' book series at De Gruyter.

Angelika Ebbinghaus

is a historian and psychotherapist, head of the Foundation for Social History of the 20th Century. She founded, and edited for many years, 1999. *Journal of Social History of the 20th and 21st Centuries* and its successor *Social.History*. She has published on the history of medicine, gender and National Socialism. Her latest research and publications addressed the global '1968'.

Dirk Hoerder

emeritus, taught at Arizona State University and at the University of Bremen. His areas of interest included history of worldwide migration systems and the sociology of migrant acculturation. He has been director of the Labor Migration Project (Bremen) and visiting scholar at York University, Duke University, University of Toronto, and Université de Paris 8-Saint Denis. His publications include *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada* (1999); *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (2002); *Geschichte der deutschen Migration* (2010); with Christiane Harzig and Donna Gabaccia, *What Is Migration History?* (2009); *Migrants and Migration in Modern North America*, with Nora Faires (2011); *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims*, with Donna Gabaccia (2011); and *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*, with Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk and Silke Neunsinger (2015).

Karin Hofmeester

is senior researcher at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and Professor of Jewish Culture at the University of Antwerp. Her main fields of interest are global labour history, global commodity chains and modern Jewish history. At the IISH she is responsible for the project a Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations in the period 1500–2000, and she works on the global commodity chain of diamonds. Her recent publications are 'Labor History in Africa' (with Filipa Ribeiro), in *History in Africa. A Journal of Method*, 41 (2014); 'Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing: from India to Europe and Back, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth', *Journal of Global History*, 8 (2013) and (with Bernd Grewe) (eds.), *Luxury in Global Perspective: Objects and Practices, 1600–2000* (Cambridge University Press).

Chitra Joshi

teaches history at Indraprastha College, University of Delhi. She has been actively engaged in writing and researching on Indian labour history. Her publications include *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories* (2003) and various book chapters and essays in journals like *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, *International Review of Social History and Studies in History*. She is currently working on the history of roads and labour in the making of colonial modernity and the paradoxes of that history. She is a member of the Governing Body of Association of Indian Labour Historians.

Andrea Komlosy

is an associate professor for Social and Economic History at the University of Vienna, where she is coordinator of the Global History programmes. She has published on problems of uneven development on a regional, a European and a global scale, in particular with regard to labour and industry; catching up; spatial reconfiguration and hegemonic shifts in the world-system. Recent books include *Theorien und Methoden der Globalgeschichte* (Böhlau 2011); *Nachholende Entwicklung* (ed.), *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte* 13.2. (Peter Lang, 2012); *Arbeit. 13. bis 21. Jahrhundert. Eine globalhistorische Perspektive* (Promedia 2014); *Europa als Weltregion – Zentrum, Modell oder Provinz?* (co-ed., new academic press 2014).

Ben Lewis

is a translator, researcher and Wolfson Scholar PhD student in Germanic Studies at the University of Sheffield. His recent publications include *Karl Kautsky on Democracy and Republicanism* (forthcoming on the Historical Materialism Book Series); *Clara Zetkin: Letters and Writings* (co-edited with Mike Jones, 2015); *Karl Kautsky on Colonialism* (co-edited with Mike Macnair, 2013); and *Zinoviev and Martov: Head-to-Head in Halle* (co-edited with Lars T. Lih, 2011).

David Mayer

is a historian specialising in transnational social history. Between 2014 and 2016 he acted as executive editor of the *International Review of Social History*. In 2011 he completed his PhD (University of Vienna) on the history of Marxist historiographic debates in Latin America in the 'long 1960s'. His main research interests are labour history, the history of social movements, the history of Marxism and left-wing intellectuals, the politics of history and methods in the digital humanities. He is currently working on a project entitled "Work and Words" – Exploring the Diversity of Labour Relations through Movement Periodicals in a "Macroscopic" Perspective'. He is honorary fellow at the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam) and serves as the vice-president of the ITH – the International Conference of Labour and Social History.

Prabhu P. Mohapatra

teaches Economic History and Labour History at the Department of History University of Delhi. After getting his PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in 1990 he has held research fellowships at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Yale University, the University of Leiden and the University of Amsterdam, Cambridge University and the University of Göttingen.

He was a Fellow at the IGK RE: Work at Humboldt University in 2011. He is the Secretary of the Association of Indian Labour Historians.

His research has been on agrarian history, migration history and the history of law and labour in the informal sector. He co-edited, with Marcel van der Linden, *Labour Matters* (2009). His essays have been published in *Studies in History*, *Indian Economic and Social History Review* and *International Review of Social History*. He has contributed book chapters to several edited volumes.

Karl Heinz Roth

historian, retired medical doctor and co-founder of the Foundation for Social History of the Twentieth Century. He has published numerous books and journal articles on the social, economic and scientific/medical history of the twentieth century, as well as on methodological questions of historical research and the critique of the political economy of labour. In 1994 came another subject field, global history, with a particular focus on global labour relations and the economic cycles of the world system. He has published the following on these topics: *Die Wiederkehr der Proletarität* (1994), *Der Zustand der Welt* (2005), *Die globale Krise* (2009). In 2009, he co-edited with Marcel van der Linden the anthology *Über Marx hinaus*, a revised version of which was published as part of the *Historical Materialism Book Series* in 2014 under the title *Beyond Marx*.

Berthold Unfried

is Associate Professor at the Institute of Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna. He is the author of several books, recently (in German): *Speaking of Oneself in an Institutional Frame: Self-Criticism and Confession* (2006); *Injustices of the Past. Compensations and Restitutions in a Global Perspective* (2014). His fields of research include Labour History and the cultural history of Stalinism, more recently the *Global History of Politics of Morals: Reparations and Development*. His current research project is on a global history of development policies in a comparative 'East/South/West' perspective on the level of transfers between the development personnel: *Development Experts and their Counterparts, 1960–90* (<http://entwicklungsexperten.univie.ac.at>). As President of the International Conference of Labour and Social History (2005–2014), he collaborated with Marcel van der Linden in the implementation of *Global Labour History* as a framework programme for the international organisation of historical research institutions.

Michael Max Paul Zeuske

historian and principal investigator of the Global South Studies Center (GSSC, University of Cologne), co-founder of the Karl-Lamprecht-Gesellschaft (Leipzig) and *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* (Leipzig). He has published numerous books and journal articles on Subaltern, Atlantic, Caribbean, Cuban, Venezuelan and Latin American history, the history of Colonialism and Revolutions in modern times (1450–today), as well as on methodological questions of historical research and historical narrative (biographical, micro and macro), the critique of Eurocentrism and the history of capitalism. In 2004 he began another subject field, the global history of slavery and the slave trades, with a particular focus on the view ‘from below’ (from the perspective of the enslaved), labour relations and the economic cycles of the Atlantic system in world history. He has published the following on these topics: *Schwarze Karibik* [Black Caribbean] (2004), *Insel der Extreme. Geschichte Kubas im 20. Jahrhundert* [Island of Extremes. History of Cuba in the 20th Century] (2007), *Von Bolívar zu Chávez. Die Geschichte Venezuelas* [From Bolívar to Chávez. The History of Venezuela] (2008), *Simón Bolívar. History and Myth* (2013), *Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis heute* [Handbook History of Slavery. A Global History from the Beginnings until Today] (2013) and *Amistad. A Hidden Network of Slavers and Merchants* (2014).

PART 1

Marcel van der Linden – Networker



Marcel van der Linden and the International Institute of Social History on the Road to Global Labour History: A Personal Account

Karin Hofmeester

One day, Marcel van der Linden and I went to Konstanz together with our colleagues Ulbe Bosma and Bhaswati Bhattacharya for a workshop on global commodity chains. We arrived a bit early and had lunch on a sunny terrace near the railway station. While eating, I asked Marcel casually: ‘Why don’t we have something like a caste system in Europe?’ From the bottom of his heart he said: ‘This is exactly the kind of question we have to pose, well done!’ Reciprocal comparisons are one way of doing global history. To make reciprocal comparisons or more generally to do global history properly – including global labour history – you have to abandon fixed ideas, presuppositions and Eurocentric worldviews. It demands an explicit outward-looking attitude and this is exactly what Marcel brought to the International Institute of Social History, to its journal, its research programme and department and eventually, via its projects and publications, to the rest of academia, where it fell on good soil.

The International Review of Social History

In 1983 Marcel van der Linden joined the International Institute of Social History, an archive, library and research institute that covers the broad field of social history, with a focus on work, workers, labour relations and labour- and other social movements. The IISH hired Marcel as editorial adviser to the Institute’s scholarly journal, the *International Review of Social History* (IRSH). The first issue that appeared with his name in the colophon was a special on Karl Marx, the nineteenth-century thinker of global capitalism, whose work Marcel studied for such a long time. Given the fact that special issues take time to prepare, we have to conclude that this is a coincidence but a happy one. At that time, the editorial board of the IRSH consisted only of IISH staff members. Marcel’s outward-looking mindset was immediately felt when he became executive editor in the late eighties: from then on, half of the editorial board came from Dutch universities, a policy that changed again in 2010 when mem-

bers from abroad entered the board. The meetings became truly international. The expertise of the board members was by now genuinely global. Marcel had also found a new publisher for the *IRSH*, Cambridge University Press, and as a consequence the journal was expanded with an annual supplement. Marcel edited the first supplement, published in 1993, and gave it the telling title *The end of labour history?* The supplement was a plea for a further integration of labour history into the broader discipline of social history and for highlighting the field's 'undiminished vitality'.¹ One of the six recommendations given in the editorial was a warning against labour history research overemphasising the 'core' areas such as the United States, Canada, Western Europe, and Japan.

Whether the developments occur in Chile, Nigeria, India, or Malaysia, they deserve to be studied as events in their own right, rather than as early stages of or deviations from developments in highly developed countries.²

Here, we see the contours of the global labour history programme Marcel and the IISH would later develop. To stick with the *IRSH* for another moment: the 1984 volume contained ten articles in total: five on England, three on Germany and one on France. In the early nineties, the articles slowly started to change scope: many of them were now comparative – not the traditional, national (often British) case studies, though these comparisons were still mostly made within a European context. Finally, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the articles became more global. The 2014 volume contains ten articles in total, two of them on sub-Saharan Africa, two on India, one on Saudi Arabia, one on inner Mongolia, one on Yugoslavia, one on France, one on Poland and Italy, and finally one on workers' transnational organisations. The Special Issue of that year was *Labour in Transport: Histories from the Global South, c. 1750–1950*. The *IRSH* has made its global turn.

The Research Department and Its Road to Global Labour History in Theory ... and Practice

When I joined the IISH in 1987 as student assistant, my prime task was to make a bibliography for the first international comparative project that had just been set up. The main goal of the project was to detect the determinants of the formation of labour movements. We selected specialists by country, who were

1 Van der Linden 1993, p. 2.

2 Ibid., p. 3.

asked to write a paper based on a fixed set of questions. We organised a series of workshops and discussed the papers in preparation for an edited volume, which in the end became a two volume publication.³ This was quite a new type of research for the Institute both in content – traditionally, research and publications at the IISH were geared towards source publications of archival collections – and in organisation: the research was conducted by an international team instead of by a solitary researcher. This international research team work would become an approved IISH method in the years to come.

One year after me, Jan Lucassen – social and economic historian at Utrecht University and later professor at the Free University in Amsterdam – joined the institute. He would become the first director of the newly established research department that would become an independent unit within the IISH. Under his guidance, the trend towards international comparisons developed further. Gradually the scope of the IISH's labour history programme expanded in time, going beyond the traditional nineteenth and twentieth century and moving back to the fifteenth century, and in space, including ever more parts of the world.

In 1999 Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen wrote a brochure, a programmatic text, entitled *Prolegomena for a Global Labour History*.⁴ It was a bold plea for the inclusion of all kinds of labour in the study of labour history – paid and unpaid, free and unfree, labour performed in households, communities and companies. It also promoted the analysis of all kinds of workers' actions, including the forms of action encountered in what was then still called the Third World (though already in inverted commas) and in pre-industrial times. It stressed the need to look at all kinds of workers' organisations, such as mutual benefit societies and cooperatives. The method recommended in this text was international comparison, a method that was already applied in an increasing number of the IISH's research projects. The research department started its own book series, no few of them edited by Marcel, with various publishers, such as the series *International and Comparative Social History*, with Peter Lang. This series contains amongst others the volume *A State of the Art* edited by Jan Lucassen. Another outlet for the research of IISH and other colleagues was the *International Studies in Social History* series with Berghahn books.

3 The project included papers on 22 European countries plus the US, Australia, New Zealand, South-Africa, Argentina and Japan and resulted in the publication: Van der Linden and Rojahn 1990.

4 Van der Linden and Lucassen 1999.

When Marcel switched position from deputy director of research to director of research in 2001, managing the department together with Lex Heerma van Voss as associate director until 2008 (when I took over Voss's job) and Jan Lucasen as sparring partner, he took all of this one step further. His *Globalizing Labour Historiography: The IISH Approach* took the *Prolegomena* as a point of departure, but theorised more about the units of analysis, the type of comparison and introduced the combination of comparisons and interactions.⁵ Under Marcel's directorship the IISH research department made the final shift from pursuing Eurocentric or Atlantic-centric labour history to actually conducting global labour history. For those of us who were reluctant at the beginning – like me – Marcel's famous example of the global commodity chain of a pair of jeans was an eye opener. The thought that so many hands, attached to so many bodies, living in different corners of the world, all performed a small part of the production process under wildly varying but seldom properly regulated labour conditions and wages, unaware of each other's existence, using materials (dyestuff, nails, zippers) that were, in their turn, the outcome of global commodity chains, was a bewildering one. It made me want to understand how the mechanisms behind this worked and how they had come into being.

Slowly but steadily, helped by various developments, not the least by the consequences of globalisation for work, workers, labour markets and labour relations that became ever more visible day by day, the researchers became convinced that this was the proper way to approach labour history. It made it relevant and challenging again. It helped to connect labour history with other disciplines working on a global scale. With the Global Labour History programme Marcel made a very important and enduring contribution to the development of the IISH research department.

Large comparative research projects on textile workers, dock workers, military workers and sex workers around the globe followed – side by side – with research on workers' interactions via global commodities such as oil, sugar, tobacco, indigo and diamonds.⁶ The explicit stress on all forms of labour led to projects on women's labour, child labour and various forms of unfree labour.⁷

5 Van der Linden 2001b.

6 Heerma van Voss, Hiemstra-Kuperus and Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2010; Davies 2000; Zürcher 2013; Ehsani 2014; Bosma 2013; Sinha-Kerkhoff 2014; Van Schendel 2012 and 2015, Hofmeester 2012 and 2013.

7 For the complete list of all publications in the project on Early Modern Women's Work see: <http://socialhistory.org/en/projects/womens-work-early-modern-period>, main monographs: Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2007; Van den Heuvel 2007; Van Dekken 2010. For child labour: Van Nederveen Meerkerk and Schmidt 2008; Lieten and van Nederveen Meerkerk 2011. For unfree

Next to that the IISH established the more overarching project A Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations 1500–2000. This project develops a globally applicable taxonomy of all types of labour relations, collects data on labour relations from 1500 to 2000 and looks at shifts in labour relations across the globe.⁸

Marcel's role in all of this was that of the idea provider and theorist. His ideas on global labour history culminated in his book *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History*. The first volume was published in yet another series edited by him: *Studies in Global Social History*, published by Brill.⁹ Many of the theoretical issues raised in this book have found their way into the setup of the IISH research projects mentioned above. Apart from his theoretical work, Marcel was a patient research and writing coach for many of us. He was also the match maker, linking people with people, people with ideas and people with ideas to funding organisations. He did so on a truly global scale.

The Research Department Revisited

Doing global labour history in practice also meant a true internationalisation of the research department and the establishment of a worldwide network of colleagues. Marcel brought both to the IISH. We shifted from having an essentially European network of colleagues to having a network of people and organisations worldwide, such as the Association of Indian Labour Historians and *Mundos do Trabalho*, the network of labour historians within the Brazilian Historical Association, ANPUH, to name just two.

For a long time, for most researchers this globalisation meant having a workshop with colleagues from abroad every now and then and having a director that spent a lot of time in airplanes and far-away countries. At a certain point however it meant we had fellows in house from all over the world, colleagues from across the globe, interns from various countries. Changing the language of our meetings from Dutch to English was just one practical outcome of these developments. Nowadays we have many workshops in different parts of the globe and in-house workshops with people from all over the world. All of these contacts enrich our perspective, stimulate reciprocal comparisons, cause

labour see: <http://socialhistory.org/nl/projects/labour-camps>; <https://socialhistory.org/en/news/how-much-did-netherlands-earn-slavery>.

8 <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/LabourRelations>.

9 Van der Linden 2008.

us to abandon fixed ideas and presuppositions and help us to develop a global worldview.

In 2014 Marcel van der Linden stepped down as director of research. A job he was asked to take up for five years became a task he fulfilled for thirteen. It is an open secret that he is happy to be relieved from his managerial tasks. Even though Marcel always had people at his side to help him with these tasks, being one of them, I can assure you that this was not really his favourite part of the job. We are happy that Marcel will stay with the IISH for at least a couple more years. Now he has time to do what he likes most: developing bright ideas and sharing them with us and the rest of the world. In the meantime, our journey on the road to Global Labour History continues.

Dialogues across Borders: Marcel van der Linden and the Association of Indian Labour Historians (AILH)

Chitra Joshi, Prabhu P. Mohapatra and Rana P. Behal

Marcel van der Linden's presence at the founding meeting of the Association of Indian Labour Historians (AILH) in December 1996 has had more than a symbolic significance for labour historians in India. This essay reflects on some of the key intersections that connect the trajectory of the AILH and labour history in India with the intellectual and political journey of Marcel van der Linden over the years.

The association between Marcel and the founding members of the AILH goes back to September 1990 when two of us (Prabhu Mohapatra and Rana Behal) were in Amsterdam for a conference on 'Capitalist Plantations in Asia', organised by Professor Jan Breman at the Centre for Asian Studies (CASA) at the University of Amsterdam. On one rainy afternoon, Marcel – then the young deputy director of Research at the International Institute of Social History (IISH) – invited us to visit the archives at the Institute. It was a great experience to be shown around the fabulous Marx-Engels collections, the Soviet Posters collection and numerous other exhibits at the IISH. Even as we marvelled at the meticulous collection of European Social and Labour movements at the IISH Archives, we were struck by the marginal presence of Non-European collections, except as part of the Europe-centred political parties or trade union papers. This was followed by a long discussion on the state of labour history in India and Europe over a very nice dinner on the banks of a canal in Utrecht. Marcel was keen to know the lie of the land in the research on labour in India and about the 'subaltern studies' movement in history, which had blazed a new trail in historiography with its focus on the autonomous peasant movements and which was increasingly framed within a post-colonial/post-modern discourse.

This was a time when the Berlin wall had fallen and Europe was in the midst of one of the most important transformations of the twentieth century, that is to say the impending collapse of 'Really existing socialism'. While we were in Amsterdam, the news of the official announcement of German unification came through on 3 October 1990. In the midst of all this, we perhaps did not fully apprehend the significance of our meeting with Marcel and our tour of



FIGURE 2.1 *AILH founding meeting, 1996*

the grand archive of the European Social and Labour movement at IISH. But the effect of that visit and the memory of Marcel's warm hospitality and genuine interest in our research remained imprinted in our minds.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe coincided with the rapid rise of liberalisation and globalisation policies worldwide. In India the rightward turn in economic policy and the rise of right-wing political movements based on religious, communal and caste identities from the 1990s on pushed class-based political movements into the background. This coincided with the tragic failure of the two-year-long Bombay Textile Strike in 1982–4 when nearly 150,000 workers lost their jobs, triggering the rapid 'de-industrialisation' of the traditional industrial centres in Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur and Ahmedabad. Labour history in India, which had been traditionally associated with the institutional history of labour organisations and the left parties, was definitely on the wane. The emergence of a broader social history of labour in India, influenced by E.P. Thompson, was still finding its feet when Chakrabarty's 'Rethinking Working Class History', published in 1989, had devastatingly argued against the 'determinist' framework of the existing labour history of India. Instead of a universalist framework of working-class formation premised on bourgeois notions of equality (*à la* Thompson), Chakrabarty posited a deeply hierarchical 'pre-capitalist' cultural formation based on primordial loyalties of caste, religion and region that shaped working-class politics in India.¹ By doing so, Chakra-

1 Chakrabarty 1989.

barty, a prominent member of the Subaltern History collective, was arguing for a distinctive trajectory for Indian working-class formation which was radically different to the 'ideal typical' European case. The crisis in Indian labour history was thus diagnosed as emerging from a mistake in categories, of following the universalist European model which valorised the 'free' wage labourer imbued with the spirit of 'freedom, equality and fraternity'.

In 1993 Marcel edited an important special supplement to the *IRSH* on the crisis of labour history (mainly in Europe) entitled 'The End of Labour History?', in which he argued that the crisis of labour history and its growing marginalisation was caused as much by its lack of internal theoretical coherence internally as it was by external factors such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of the socialist alternative. Interestingly, in the brief but succinct introduction, he mentioned the problem of overemphasising core capitalist European and North Atlantic regions at the expense of the capitalist periphery:

The burgeoning labour history of the capitalist periphery merits the same consideration as the labour history of the core countries. Whether developments occur in Chile, Nigeria, India or Malaysia, they deserve to be studied as events in their own right, rather than as early stages of or deviations from the developments in the highly developed countries.²

However, all the essays in this important volume, including two co-authored by Marcel himself, focused mainly on the core countries. This situation and the general tenor of the *International Review of Social History* under Marcel's editorship was, however, in for a significant makeover in the subsequent years.

In 1994 Prabhu Mohapatra was invited to be a fellow at the newly founded International Institute of Asian Studies at Leiden and Amsterdam. Over the next years, the resumption of intensive interaction with Marcel at the *IISH* over issues of labour history led to the co-convening of an International workshop on 'South Asian Labour: Global and Local Linkages' at the *IISH* in 16–18 October 1995 in Amsterdam. The workshop aimed to bring together and showcase the vibrancy and variety of labour historiography of South Asia and also to reflect critically on the themes that had hitherto dominated labour historiography in the region – the focus on free wage labour to the exclusion of varieties of servile and 'unfree' labour, the absence of pre-colonial and post-colonial labour from the purview of labour history, integrating experience of overseas migrant

2 van der Linden (ed.) 1993.

labour and the vexed question of the relationship between the segmentary consciousness of religion, caste and region with class consciousness. The workshop brought together for the first time the major practitioners of labour history of India in a conference. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Jan Breman, Chitra Joshi, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Dilip Simeon, Raj Chandavarkar, Janaki Nair, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, G. Balachandran, Prasannan Parthasarathy, Ranjan Ghosh and Vijay Prashad were among the twenty-two paper presenters at the conference. The conference held at the IISH benefitted from the inspiring guidance of Marcel and, in the discussions that followed, it was agreed that a network of the labour historians of India was to be set up with the aim of reinvigorating labour history in India. That was the beginning of a long relationship with Marcel van der Linden, with the founding meeting of the AILH taking place in December 1996 at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. It came as a major turning point.

Over the next two decades, there was a creative dialogue between the concerns of the AILH and Marcel's ideas on labour history. His deep political commitment to labour issues and his active intervention in reviving a 'broader' social history of labour, as well as his effort to understand labour in a wider international context, connected closely with the interests of historians in India in the 1990s. Labour historians in India were pushing beyond the boundaries of 'old labour history' and engaging with issues of culture and community, gender, family and household and everyday life. Navigating between the Scylla of a Eurocentric model of the working class and the Charybdis of cultural indigenism, the 1990s and early 2000s saw an efflorescence of Indian labour history. Chandavarkar, Joshi, Simeon and Nair's monographs in many ways marked a major breakthrough in the discipline of labour history. They were the fruit of solid empirical and archival researches conducted in the 1980s.³ The founding of the Association of Indian Labour Historians (AILH) in 1996 thus marked a cusp in the development of the discipline, as historians and scholars of labour began to expand the limits of social history of labour by grappling with fundamental issues of working-class formation in India marked by the experience of colonialism. In the process they also had to stretch, willy-nilly, the definition of the working class to include the histories of bonded workers, migrant labour and the part-peasant, part-proletarian who moved between rural and urban settings and between subsistence activity and wage earning. The expansion of the informal labour sector in India in the 1990s following the decline and restructuring of old industries and India's increasing integra-

3 Chandavarkar 1994; Simeon 1995; Nair 1998; Joshi 2003.

tion into the world economy also necessitated the search for new and inclusive frameworks for understanding labour and its history. These thematic and theoretical reconsiderations were reflected in the series of International Conferences on Labour History organised by the AILH from March 1998 onwards on key themes such as 'Transitions', 'Return of the "Marginals"', 'Work and Non-Work' and so on. From the beginning, the AILH conferences, in which Marcel was a regular presence, brought together historians from around the world into a dialogue with historians and scholars of labour from India. Labour historians from Africa and South America, as well as from Germany, France and the USA, were drawn to the conference in many instances because of Marcel's networking skills. Marcel was an important presence in these conferences. His abundant gifts for synthesis were in evidence in pithy summarisations and in drawing together the main themes of the conference and charting of future paths. He also delivered the second Arvind Narayan Das Memorial Lecture at the conference in 2004, which was named after a founder member of the AILH.

Marcel's own intellectual trajectory reflected these changes promised in his 1993 article ('End of Labour History'). His critique of the Eurocentric assumptions of mainstream labour history now became increasingly sharp. This was evidenced in the conscious choice to expand the themes of the *International Review of Social History* to include non-European histories of labour. The December 1996 issue of *IRSH* coincided with the founding meeting of AILH and the issue contained a special Supplement edited by Marcel and Shahid Amin on 'Peripheral Labour? Studies in the History of Partial Proletarianization'. Its articles revisited the classical notion of a pure working class with several contributions from India and the so-called Periphery.⁴ What was interesting was the attempt to bring discussions on 'partial proletarianisation' to bear on the labour history in the core countries, as was wonderfully showcased in Alan Faure's article on Parisian rag pickers in the volume. By bringing non-European experiences into vibrant conversation with European labour history, Marcel and his colleague Jan Lucassen (who was from 1998 also like Marcel a life member of AILH and a constant presence at AILH conferences) were charting a new course for a revival of the discipline through a move to Global Labour History. Their joint manifesto 'Prolegomena for a Global History', published in 1999, clearly enunciated the critique of the Eurocentric legacy of mainstream labour history and its narrow focus on 'industrial, organized and largely male' labour and argued for a comparative and transnational labour history that would bring the

4 Amin and van der Linden (eds.) 1996.

developments in the non-European world into the centre stage.⁵ This shift of focus and methodological turn was aptly captured on the front cover of the publication, where photographs of women brick workers in India were placed alongside illustrations of child workers from England in the nineteenth century.

Marcel's engagement with the labour histories of the non-Western world was strengthened even as his own intellectual trajectory moved towards espousing a Global Labour History. Instead of the flattening of differences on which the dominant discourse of 'globalisation' was premised, Marcel's idea of global history explicitly incorporated differences in the trajectories of development of different working-class formations. This is evident most explicitly in his continuing interrogation of the classical category of 'working class' by using the concept of 'informal' labour, which is patently rooted in 'Third World' contexts. In an important international workshop organised by SEPHIS in Mexico in 2001, the concept of Informal Sector Labour History was discussed in detail. Marcel's contribution to that conference articulated the notion of a 'World Working Class' which connected conceptually the workers in the vast informal sector around the world with the core of formally free wage labour. While Informal Labour is not easily translated into the emerging notion of 'precariat', nevertheless Marcel's recent discussion of the idea, elaborated largely in the European context, resonates closely with the debates on flexible/informal labour in India.⁶ At the global level, Marcel argues, the precariat today is different from the casual, unemployed workforce of the middle decades of the twentieth century. Unlike in the earlier period, uncertainty, flexibility and precariousness are a structured part of the labour force today. What he emphasises is the close convergence in contemporary processes of working-class formation in countries of the North and the South.

A major conceptual difficulty for Global Labour History lay in finding the axes of comparison for contemporary transformations of labour in both the North and the South with different historical legacies, developing at different temporal rhythms. In an important collection of essays in a co-edited volume in 2007 with Rana Behal entitled *India's Labouring Poor: Historical Studies c. 1600–c. 2000*, this problem of differential development, both across space and time, was addressed by historians of Indian labour.⁷ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's introductory essay in the volume aimed to shift the focus from the traditional North-South comparison to a conceptually viable South-South

5 van der Linden and Lucassen 1999.

6 Tari and Vanni 2005; van der Linden 2014.

7 Behal and van der Linden 2007.

comparison of trajectories of working-class formation, arguing for homomorphisms in the fuzzy structural location of the working class in colonial India and in present-day developing countries.⁸ In this essay, Bhattacharya argued for a cautious approach to a global comparison that would fully take into account the asymmetries of power between the North and the South.

An emphasis on a global perspective has been central to Marcel's interventions in AILH gatherings and beyond. What did a global perspective mean for labour historians in India? Among many historians of labour, particularly those in the non-European world, there was a certain apprehension about the new trend toward the global. There was a fear that this would bring back Eurocentrism of a new kind and lead to a suppression of perspectives from the margins, the local and the regional. However, the AILH conference 'Towards Global Labour History: New Comparisons' (2005) and its volume of essays, edited and introduced by Marcel and Prabhu Mohapatra, marked an important departure, showing how the global does not lead to a dilution of the particular.⁹ From close studies of labour regimes and patterns of resistance, to the dynamics of migration and mobility within and across national boundaries, to modes of labour regulation, the essays pointed to possibilities of developing global perspectives through dense micro-histories. Interventions like this have been important in rethinking notions of the global, showing how developments in the non-West are crucial to conceptualising the global. Marcel's enormously influential publication *Workers of the World* fully incorporated ideas of asymmetries of power – a key concern of those sceptical towards Global Labour History – at the same time as it launched a theoretical broadside on the twin problems of Eurocentrism and 'methodological nationalism' – applying equally to the practitioners of labour history in the North and South.¹⁰

Marcel's own writings are rooted in a Marxist tradition that is critical of old orthodoxies but shares a certain scepticism about ideas that tend to threaten or subvert the conceptual premises of Marxism. There is, for instance, an effort on his part to keep a critical distance from frameworks which he sees as 'decentring' labour history: perspectives that look at 'micro-politics' without looking at the macro or at formal political processes. There is also an underlying anxiety that a focus on the micro may 'depoliticise' and 'decentre' labour history.¹¹ These anxieties, however, have never limited his openness to new ideas or his questioning of earlier categories. In many of his recent writings, Marcel has

8 Bhattacharya 2007, pp. 7–20.

9 Mohapatra and van der Linden 2009.

10 van der Linden 2008.

11 van der Linden 1995; van der Linden 2003d.

critiqued existing notions of class and politics, re-thought earlier conceptual frames and argued for the use of more inclusive categories.¹²

In this essay we have tried to emphasise the enormous debt that labour historians owe to the intellectual and organisational energy of Marcel and to his innate intellectual generosity, which has made possible vibrant conversations across borders among historians of labour of all countries of the world. As a personal friend to many of us, and as an intellectual inspiration for Indian labour historians and the AILH, Marcel will always be special.

¹² van der Linden 2005a.

Marcel van der Linden and the International Conference of Labour and Social History (ITH)*

David Mayer and Berthold Unfried

The International Conference of Labour and Social History is the International of labour historians. As with all internationals, its claims to be global are incomplete, it has gaps and it is not represented everywhere across the world. Today we would rather call it transnational – a scientific community that goes beyond the framework of nation states and that is not so much active between these states (as with diplomacy or international organisations) but rather beyond them.

The ITH, founded in 1964 as an international conference of labour movement historians, originally had a historical-diplomatic function in the context of the 'East-West' conflict. This *raison d'être* of the old ITH, which often went along with ritualised forms of exchanging views, was not precisely to the intellectual taste of Marcel. He joined the ITH only at the end of the bipolar world, at a moment when the question acutely arose of whether such an association made sense any more. Had labour history not become obsolete as a subject? Many were baffled: after the end of the competition between the two systems, which had charged both politics and historiography with real tension and which had been an important motive behind establishing the ITH, did it still have a function? At the beginning, in the years following the collapse of the Soviet world system, there was, after all, a boom in the research of its history: studying the history of international communism in terms of understanding Stalinism. The opening up of state socialism's vast archives ushered in a new historiography and occupied research for over a decade. Research on the German Democratic Republic also boomed.

Yet, following the turn of the millennium, this line of research started to wear out. The ITH looked for a new line, for novel ways to renew labour history and to bring it back to the international debate. Marcel had a new orientation to hand: labour history (i.e. the history of both labour relations and labourers, male and female, and in all world regions) as a part of global history. Together: Global

* Translated by Ben Lewis, March 2014.

Labour History. But what did 'Global History' mean around 2005? Was it to be a new edition of the GDR's world history and the Soviet Union's *mirovaja istorija*, whose global claims were sneered – or marvelled – at even at a time when they had been influential? Even though it is difficult to believe this in light of its recent meteoric rise, in 2005 'global history' was still a novel field.

Up until today Global Labour History as a research field is still in its infancy. As with global history in general, its major concern is to overcome the Eurocentrism and the confinement to the nation state that have contributed to the isolation of 'old' labour history – by which we mean the kind of labour history between the 1960s and the 1990s which for a long time had been labelled 'new labour history'.

Of course, limiting themselves to the nation state did not simply reflect an intellectual narrowness on the part of the protagonists of this labour history – after all, the organised labour movement in Europe had achieved influence within the framework of the nation state and not through transnational organisational forms.

The basic concepts of labour such as 'wage labour' and 'working class' were defined by European experiences. As research from the 1970s onwards began to make clear, these experiences cannot be globalised offhand: labour relations in the 'Global South' do not readily fit into these concepts. The global labour history approach responds to this with a very broad interpretation of the concept of 'labour' – alongside wage labour it also includes forms of 'unfree' labour and bonded 'contract labour' right through to slavery. It includes both paid and unpaid labour, i.e. labour carried out within the framework of subsistence production and domestic labour, as well as labour both in the industrial and agricultural spheres. Here, and particularly in his major intervention *Workers of the World* (2009), Marcel's concept of the 'working class' is consistently stretched to its potential limits: all those whose labour power is sold (hired out) or appropriated belong to the class of 'subaltern workers'. Within this broad frame, Marcel has developed a comprehensive and yet flexible typology of labour relations, a kind of historical sociology of labour.

The second main concern is to overcome 'methodological nationalism', which has limited research to the framework of the nation state. The nation state must be viewed as a European phenomenon of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a transient interim result of historical development and not as the end product of world history. This may seem obvious, but if taken seriously it has far-reaching consequences: can one speak of 'society' and imagine it as congruent with the framework of the nation state? If we look beyond Europe, it soon becomes clear that such a notion (used, more often than not, only implicitly) is not particularly appropriate. In Latin America, for example, it is difficult

to talk of 'a' or 'one' Guatemalan society or an Ecuadorian society. Anybody who knows these countries would not work on such a basis. There exist several societies under the institutional framework of these states.

Related to that is Eurocentrism: all the conceptions of development that implicitly regard the variant of European development as the path that has to be followed by all other civilisations on earth if they are to reach civilised conditions, economic growth and prosperity or even socialism share a Eurocentric outlook. This is true of all varieties of modernisation theory, including in the form in which it was represented by sections of the European labour movement. Concepts such as modernisation theories and most Marxist-inspired theories of the progress of social development share these basic assumptions.

Speaking of Marxism: Marcel is aware of the peculiar dual nature of Marxism from his own political and intellectual career: on the one hand, within Marxism there is a radical otherness with which the foundations of capitalist modernity and its diverse forms of oppression can be analysed and challenged. Whether we are dealing with labour, class, gender or discourse relations, the possibility of practically and theoretically transcending them has been, and is to this day, associated with Marxism. As Göran Therborn puts it in his essays *From Marxism to Post-Marxism?* (2008), in the twentieth-century Marxism, with its extensive modes of action, formed its own alternative 'modernity': today it has almost been forgotten among the other 'multiple modernities'.

On the other hand, various (self-) restrictions were associated with Marxism that deeply integrated it into existing relations of oppression: the 'working class', the heroic subject of social liberation, has long been male, white, associated with certain formalised labour relations and resident in the 'Global North'. The participatory gains won by the labour movements in some regions of the world came at the cost of the exclusion of other subaltern workers. Self-employed, female, informal, subsistence-oriented, migrant, seasonal, agricultural, debt-bonded labour, or labour extorted by physical violence – in short, all the kinds of labour that did not correspond to the idea of 'doubly free wage labour' – remained outside of this category. This exclusion was also reflected in the scientific and historiographical studies of labour and labourers. In recent years Marcel has, together with others, made important contributions to overcoming this intellectual exclusion – starting from and remaining cognisant of the already mentioned dual character of the historically diverse references to Marx, which fluctuated between critique of inequality and an ideology to justify certain forms of it. His paths in *Beyond Marx* (2009) thus transcend boundaries. They are, at the same time, less a matter of completely leaving behind familiar realms than of theoretically and empirically exploring new territory within shouting distance of these realms.

Of course, such explorations are not without their problems: according to the apt maxim from Marcel's programme for a Global Labour History, the logic of capital accumulation was, and is, compatible with the most diverse labour relations. However, with his concept of a 'subaltern' and 'multiform' working class, he amalgamates all those whose labour is commodified into one group, despite these actors being enormously differentiated. As is often the case with radically expanded analytical categories, Marcel's concept of the working class has a levelling tendency: should relations in which the products of labour are commodified (self-employed labour, tenant farming) not be distinguished from those in which formally, in terms of the contract, labour power is given (hired out) yet actual, living labour taken (free wage labour)? Should these relations, in turn, not be distinguished from those in which it is less the products of either immediate labour or hired labour power that are commodified, but rather the human being as a whole (slavery)? To ask these questions is to do more than split hairs. These questions cut to the core of Global Labour History: does so-called free wage labour have a special position in the past and future processes of capital accumulation, or is it equal among many labour relations under capitalism? Is Global Labour History about reconstructing a general – uneven, partial and broken but globally effective – tendency towards proletarianisation (free wage labour), or a history of the commodification of labour power(s) and the fruits of labour? As one can easily imagine, the answer to these questions has a series of political implications (and, on occasion, political prerequisites). In terms of theory and practical research they raise doubts, if, in the attempt to overcome earlier limitations, the baby of useful differentiations was not thrown out with the bathwater.

As with Global History, Global Labour History attempts not to end with its critique of 'Eurocentrism' and 'methodological nationalism', but to focus on new objects of research: it seeks transnational contacts and to reveal connections that have remained unseen by a view restricted to the nation state. It is set to develop a new research agenda. In such an approach, it would no longer be useful to regard, for example, 'Red Vienna' as a phenomenon of the nation state, or communism as a European matter. Also, no object of research should be considered to be incomparable with others any more. Such attempts at comparisons that go beyond Europe and at transnational transfer studies have the capability of shifting perspectives and altering research outcomes.

For several years the ITH has been attempting to shape its conferences in the spirit of such a programme. This has certainly made them more exciting and colourful, but also more inconsistent and boundless. Global Labour History's concept of labour is, indeed, very comprehensive: alongside wage labour, which previously was often uncritically equated with 'labour', it includes so many

areas of human activity that it covers a good deal of the scope of global history. While thereby expanding the scope of its interests, the ITH has also strived to keep its core area in view.

Marcel personally exemplifies this global programme in his life as a scientific thinker. It makes little sense to ascribe to him the identity of a Dutchman. He is the Global Labour historian of our time and has, as such, a transnational identity. He appears at conferences in Johannesburg and Amsterdam, Sao Paulo, Linz and Shanghai and his habitat is the global community of global historians of labour. He is thus attempting to create, and expand, a world-wide scientific community by posing new questions, as Georges Haupt did in the 1970s. It is not only possible to talk with Marcel about 'transnational networks' (the topic of an ITH conference in 2007); thanks to him, such networks could actively be formed. Building such networks is an invaluable and – as of yet, since everybody talks about networks – rare ability, especially in the world of solitary scientific thinkers. Marcel derives this ability not just from intellect and interest, but also from courtesy and friendship. The ITH wishes to be his companion in seeking to expand these networks of friendship and intellectual affinity across the world.

Marcel van der Linden – Friend of the Foundation for Social History of the Twentieth Century*

Angelika Ebbinghaus

To this day Marcel van der Linden has been a source of ideas and inspiration for the Foundation, as well as a companion, supporter, adviser and critic – in short, a friend. The contact between Marcel and the Foundation goes back to 1989/1990: the years of upheaval. At this time the International Institute of Social History (IISH) was advising facilities across the world, but mainly in Eastern Europe, which were working in history and the social sciences. These facilities had come into financial difficulties or were even threatened with closure and did not know how to safeguard their book and archive collections in the long term, some of which were valuable. An era of emergency had dawned for the Institute in Amsterdam; we too sought its advice, because the Foundation for Social History of the Twentieth Century was faced with many problems following its separation from the WIKU at the end of 1989:¹ aside from the fact that long-term financial security had to be found, questions also arose concerning its future main research areas as well as the preservation of its library and archives.

In November 1988 the Foundation's board visited the Amsterdam Institute for the first time. Van der Linden took a lot of time for our concerns – in later years too the Foundation has profited over and over again from this empathy that marks him out. Once the Foundation had set up its new premises in Hamburg's Schanzendorf, the entire board of the IISH paid us a visit.

Van der Linden visited the archives and the library and discussed with us the Foundation's structures, research profile and publications. He gave us advice on how to organise ourselves internally, what our research-political formation should look like and how we should network in order to ensure the long-term survival of our facility. Thus we discussed, for example, whether the Foundation – on the basis of its projects then underway ('General Plan Ost' [the Master Plan East]; 'Collaboration with the Nazis'; 'Auschwitz' and 'Weapons

* Translated by Ben Lewis, March 2014.

1 Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur.

of Mass Destruction') – could clarify the extent to which previous research findings had to be corrected in light of the German sources in the Russian special archives that had become available in the meantime.

In addition, the board of the IISH also offered its practical help and was willing to open its doors to us and integrate us into existing structures – for example when the Foundation was accepted into the IALHI.²

Our first substantive cooperation resulted from these contacts. The Foundation produced an annotated documentation on the history of the IISH during the German occupation between 1940 and 1944,³ and an item on the German Labour Front's role in plundering the archives of the Western European trade unions;⁴ the latter was a focus of the IISH's collection. That was the beginning of a fruitful cooperation with van der Linden which has lasted to this day.

Van der Linden, a passionate producer of journals, was soon offering the Foundation's journal, 1999. *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, articles from his networks that he wanted to make known in German-speaking countries. Already at that time these networks were widespread.

If articles were rejected by the editors because they had to be translated then he always accepted their reasons without grumbling. In 1997 he became a member of the editorial board and brought his own questions and topics to the journal on several occasions. In 2003 he became co-editor of the journal and demanded a more global and transnational focus, which soon found expression in the creation of topic-specific editorial teams dedicated to transnational labour and global history. His assessment of the articles that came in were clever, concise, informed and always arrived on time – a pleasant cooperation. As co-editor, not only did Marcel initiate conceptual debates, he also even took time to carry out the final corrections. Anybody who has been involved with the production of journals knows how much time this work, which needs to be carried out on a regular basis, can cost. And to my shame, I must confess that this Dutchman, even if he is a Dutchman with German roots, always found far too many errors, something that without doubt was a great asset to the journal's quality. His advice was also appreciated when it came to decisions regarding publishing policy – until, that is, the journal passed into the hands of younger people as the internet journal *Sozial.Geschichte Online*. In the circle of those producing the journal we knew that Marcel, despite his responsibilities across the globe as the Research Director of the IISH, could always be counted on – and we counted on him. Thanks, Marcel, and well done!

2 International Association of Labour History Institutions.

3 Roth 1989.

4 Roth 1989a, pp. 272–86.

Van der Linden has also left his mark when it comes to the content of the Foundation's publications. Even today it is worthwhile reading his regularly published annotations; they are concise and show the wealth of his reading on his worldwide research topic, labour history without geographical or temporal limitations, as he once put it.⁵ Many of the thoroughly programmatic contributions on his way to Global Labour History first appeared in German in the Foundation's journal, 1999.⁶ When, in preparing this article, I read through our journal, which we had published together for several years,⁷ and read his contributions once again, I had to rub my eyes in amazement at the many discussion offerings that Marcel had introduced. Yet as he himself knew, in these years the history of workers and the workers' movement as a topic met with only limited interest.

I have to admit that back then this topic was not among my favourites either. Yet as is often the case with clever thoughts, they are ahead of their time and their significance is only recognised subsequently. Sticking to a topic even when it is not part of the mainstream requires a considerable degree of tenacity and an independence of thought – I would say that Marcel presides over both qualities.

Marcel wrote on syndicalist labour movements in our journal on two occasions. In 1990, together with Wayne Thorpe, he traced the reasons for the rise and fall of these radical currents within the workers' movement.⁸ Regardless of whether the syndicalists had been supporters of anarcho-syndicalism, revolutionary industrialism or 'one big union', and regardless of whether they understood themselves to be centralists or decentralists, they all regarded 'direct action' as their common and most important means of struggle. They all hoped to transcend capitalism and for the establishment of a social system in which male and female workers managed production and ran social affairs themselves.

The authors compared the emergence, peak and decline of the syndicalist movements in twelve different countries. In particular, they studied these movements in the context of changes to the labour processes and to the work relationship (the second industrial revolution). For the authors, the syndicalist movements also gained influence because the workers were dissatisfied with the policies of the social democrats, particularly in light of the ravages of World

5 Cf. the Foundation's website: www.stiftung-sozialgeschichte.de, and go to 'Zeitschrift: Archiv: Besprechungen'.

6 This journey is reconstructed in detail by Karl Heinz Roth in this volume.

7 Together with Karl Heinz Roth.

8 Van der Linden and Thorpe 1990, pp. 9–38.

War I both at home and abroad. But it was the state that above all contributed to its decline, either through repressive measures or integrative offerings of social welfare.

Eleven years later Marcel van der Linden, who by now was on his way to a Global Labour History, took up the topic of syndicalism again and defined it as an international movement that had arisen due to international migration, international labour processes and the border-crossing activities of its supporters.⁹ Not untypically of him, he took the wind out of the sails of those who criticised his and Thorpes's conception of syndicalism for being too broad: for him it was a matter of defining the subject on which you are writing before you do so; whether one ultimately defines it too broadly or too narrowly is not a matter of science but of taste. For him it is important – and he lets the reader participate in his thoughts – to distinguish between three levels when writing on syndicalism: the ideological, the organisational and the workplace levels. While, according to van der Linden, historians are inclined to look most intensely at the ideological level, he was more interested in what a movement does in practice and not how it justifies these actions.

However, he would only classify a movement as revolutionary syndicalist if it exhibited syndicalist elements at the level of the workplace and in its organisational structures. Following these definitional specifications he, as always, combed through a wide range of international research literature in order to determine that the loss of professional privileges did not automatically promote syndicalist orientations and also that the matter of where the money with which the syndicalist organisations funded themselves came from was largely neglected. Marcel has always remained open to new research findings, approaches and insights. Thus he not only closely followed gender research, but integrated its findings into his own considerations too: regardless of all national differences, for him syndicalist culture had been characterised by a specific understanding of masculinity – a 'virile syndicalism'. Many of the revolutionary syndicalists' actions and forms of struggle therefore rightly had to be viewed in a new and critical manner.

Sensitised by these feminist views on the labour movement, he demanded that future analysis take the impact of these cultural influences on the three levels of analysis – the workplace, organisation and ideology – into greater account.

The ability to pose questions, both simple and unusual ones, is the mark of a productive scientific thinker. Marcel knows how to pose questions, often

9 Van der Linden 2001, pp. 141–58.

allowing his readers to participate in this process, which thoroughly assists the readability of his texts. So why did revolutionary syndicalism greatly expand in some countries and hardly at all in others? As he had done as early as 1990, Marcel attributed a decisive role to the state in this, regardless of whether it exhibited more repressive or welfare-state traits. And in a not untypical fashion he concluded his essay by proposing new research. According to Marcel, syndicalist movements in countries with a developed welfare state should be compared with those without such a state in order to learn more about working-class radicalism.

The question of 'under what conditions people choose which means in order to resist' occupied Marcel over and over again and inspired him to undertake further research.¹⁰ On this topic of collective resistance as well he distilled from a very broad research literature a number of questions that male and female researchers of the topic should keep in mind if possible: the problem of sources (since they were often put together by opponents of resistance); various forms of collective resistance (open, covert and symbolic); and finally the extent to which the reasons for resistance could be conveyed as legitimate and just. He proposed as a bottom line a number of parameters that necessarily should enter into an analysis so that collective resistance can be studied for what it normally is: sensible human behaviour.

From the second half of the 1990s on, Marcel van der Linden published a number of texts, in our journal too, which nicely document his journey to becoming a global labour historian. As early as 1997 he called for the foundation of an International of Labour Historians;¹¹ at a time, that is, when following the collapse of 'actually existing socialism' there were no prizes to be won for researching the subject of the workers' movement in the academic field of the Western world. And he correctly pointed out that in the countries of the Third World a movement in virtually the opposite direction could be observed. Thus, for example, the Association of Indian Labour Historians was founded in New Delhi, something in which Marcel played a key role,¹² and the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History planned an Asia-Pacific Labour History Network together with Indian research facilities. In several African, Asian and Latin American countries there were launches of associations, magazines and institutions that explicitly dealt with the history

10 Van der Linden 1995, p. 346.

11 Van der Linden 1997, pp. 7–9.

12 On the significance of his contact with Indian historians, see the essay by Joshi, Mohapatra and Behal in this volume.

of labour, male and female workers and workers' movements. Globally it was therefore impossible to speak of a decline in historiography on this topic – quite the opposite was the case.

His commentary on the beginning of the year 1999, 'How standard is the standard labour relation?' also had a programmatic character.¹³ A standard labour relation should be understood as one that is geared towards duration and stability and whose wage level makes it possible to sustain a family and where socio-political participation rights and social security in the case of accident, illness and old age are guaranteed. For Marcel, empirical evidence indicates that with the globalisation of labour relations it was not only normal wage labour relations that asserted themselves. All forms of dependent labour – right through to forced and slave labour – can exist alongside each other. For him the standard labour relation was more of an anomaly both in the past and in the present – this was something that had to have consequences for the analysis of labour and the definition of it. Logically Marcel spoke in favour of rewriting the history of male and female workers in globalisation.¹⁴ In light of this global approach, questions upon questions were asked: if social processes are studied across the world, then how should the relationship between state and society be viewed?

Or for all the differences, is it possible to proceed on the assumption of a world society? Which concept of capitalism should be taken as its basis, and how can a non-Eurocentric history be written anyway? How can the concept of the world working class be operationalised so that it actually includes the most diverse forms of labour? Which forms of exploitation exist alongside free wage labour, what cross-overs between them are present and how can these different forms be conceptualised?

This approach cannot be redeemed by a single scientific discipline, but presupposes collaboration with other disciplines, from the historiography of slavery through to the history of the family, to women's and gender history. An expansion of the sources and methods goes hand-in-hand with this broadening.

Many concepts of North Atlantic and Western European labour historiography also had to be reconsidered, since they had a different importance in different countries or could not be filled with content at all. The extent to which this global view of labour leads to a world history of labour in the sense

¹³ Van der Linden 1999, pp. 7–18.

¹⁴ Van der Linden 2003, pp. 10–40. Van der Linden 2003, 'Die Geschichte der Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter in der Globalisierung', in *Sozial.Geschichte. Zeitschrift für historische Analyse des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 18, 1.

of a universal history, that is to say, a more additive analysis, or whether the globalisation of labour must be understood from the globalisation of the economy, that is to say from the capitalist world system, has not yet been clarified. That said, Marcel himself tends towards the latter model of explanation.

Consequently, in 2005 Marcel van der Linden proposed a historic redefinition of the world working class.¹⁵ At the centre of this commentary was a discussion of the extent to which the concept of the working class, as it had emerged in the nineteenth century, had not always represented a narrowing of the actually existing forms of labour.

On the basis of their own empirical studies, scientists from Asia, Africa and Latin America in particular had critically scrutinised this narrowly conceived concept of the working class – the doubly free wage labour in the Marxian sense – because the boundaries between ‘free’ wage labour, self-employment and unfree labour were porous. What then could a new concept of the world working class look like that constructively integrates this critique? For Marcel, the Marxist analysis of capitalism should still serve as the orientation and output matrix of this concept, since for many scientific thinkers across the world it still represented an important source of inspiration and, despite some weaknesses, was still the best analysis that we have. Marcel van der Linden illustrated the diversity of possible labour forms with a schema: the bearer of labour capacity disposes of his labour power and first of all sells his labour himself (free wage workers, tenant farmers, self-employed craftsmen); second, the worker disposes of his labour power and does not sell it himself (wage labour for a subcontractor); third, the worker sells his labour power but does not dispose of it (slave-wage labour) and fourth, the worker does not dispose of his own labour power and does not sell it himself (serfs, child labour). In addition, the boundaries between these forms are dynamic and all kinds of variations can occur, as he shows with historical examples.

Within capitalism there is obviously a large class of people whose labour power has assumed the character of a commodity in different ways. I call this class subaltern workers. They form a highly staggered mass comprising serfs, tenant farmers, small craftsmen and wage workers. It is the historical dynamic of this ‘multitude’ that we must try to understand.¹⁶

Further to this, the research findings of the feminist ‘Bielefeld School’ on reproductive and subsistence labour had considerably expanded the traditional

¹⁵ Van der Linden 2005, pp. 7–28.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

concept of the working class. For Marcel the reproduction of the working class had always been associated with the work in the household that had mainly been performed by women. For Marcel, both factors must be taken into account in a historical redefinition of the world working class.

In 2007 Marcel van der Linden asked: 'What's new in global labour history?'¹⁷ While old historiography on labour and the working class was oriented towards institutions, organisations, political debates, leaders and strikes, New Labour History had placed the economic and technological environment in a greater context.

Spurred on by the social protest movements of the 1970s, since then the view of labour and the working class had once again greatly expanded.

Centre stage was now the immediate consequences of the labour process itself as well as the influence of everyday culture: gender, ethnicity and race were integrated into the analysis. This new historiography of labour had been 'a veritable intellectual revolution'.¹⁸ Since the 1990s, this New Labour History had gained an increasingly global perspective that was attempting to overcome methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism. This prepared the field for a global history of labour. What does Marcel van der Linden understand by this? Regarding the methodological approach, he does not want to develop a new theory, nor does he want to modify any existing theory.

I interpret his approach to mean that the interests of the actors form the yardstick of how the field of the history of labour should be structured. The vast amounts of data could be systematised by means of these 'fields of interest' and thereby analysed. This notwithstanding, he was however prepared to engage with all those who supported these theoretical concepts.

Based on the spectrum of topics, global history of labour should refer to transnational and transcontinental studies of the working relations and social movements of the workers in the broadest sense of the word. Finally, the studies should never cover only individual workers, but families/households in order to make visible gender-conditioned divisions of labour. And finally there must not be any temporal restrictions for a global history of labour.

Marcel saw that this project of a global history of labour that truly spans both global space and time understandably entails many problems which were founded in the organisation and financing of such research alone; moreover it was a matter of overcoming high methodological hurdles, above all methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism. Because just about every concept in the history

17 Van der Linden 2007, pp. 31–44.

18 Ibid., p. 32.

of labour had arisen in the Western industrialised countries, their suitability for a global history of labour had to be put to the test.

The traditional concept of the working class had to be expanded so that no group of workers remained excluded. Such a global project presented empirical research with completely new challenges in relation to the collection and storage of data (databases) and its comparison, since quite a few concepts have a different significance in different regions of the world.

Marcel van der Linden also ended this article with a research proposal that he illustrated using the example of the global production of jeans: a study of global production chains and a comparison of the different labour processes in such a chain would suggest itself for historical research. One result of this research could be that the possibilities of international solidarity by means of the different interests of the workers could be rationally gauged.

In a discussion volume *Kontroversen über den Zustand der Welt*¹⁹ Marcel proceeded from the thesis, drawing on Reinhart Koselleck, that we are living in a saddle period, that is to say in a situation of change. A new epoch may be showing itself on the horizon, but to correctly assess these new developments is particularly difficult in a saddle period. Is capitalism, then, heading towards its end in the foreseeable future or on the contrary, does it still have a lot of potential for growth? Marcel van der Linden was interested in the arguments put forward in such debates in earlier times, and wondered whether they are still the same today.

He himself was not convinced by arguments that were premised on capitalism's decay. This was because he, like the historian Jan Romein, could not see any new institutions that could replace those of capitalism. He argued with Moshé Machover, contending that three factors spoke in favour of long-lasting and diverse possibilities for capitalism to develop. Firstly, labour productivity, which in the twentieth century alone had doubled every thirty years, secondly the extent of integration into the world market and thirdly the extent to which the logic of the commodity had penetrated people's lives. He therefore proceeds from the assumption that the capitalist dynamic of the coming years will not only lead to global power shifts, but also to the further impoverishment of large parts of the global population.

Besides this, both the struggle for the world's resources and military confrontations would in all likelihood increase. In short, not a pleasant prospect. Over and again Marcel van der Linden became interested in the positions of outsiders – in small political groupings and journal projects. He rescued them

19 Van der Linden 2007a, pp. 15–28.

from oblivion, unearthed them in the sources, interviewed former activists and wrote about them. Following the end of World War II a group of anti-fascists came together in London to found the 'World Organisation for a Democracy of Content'.²⁰ They drew a distinction between this substantive democracy and political democracy, which in their eyes was purely formal.

From 1947 they published the journal *Contemporary Issues*. They rejected Hitler and Stalin equally because in both National Socialism and Stalinism they saw a capitalist barbarism. What is interesting about these groupings, which have been totally forgotten today, is their grassroots orientation and their critical analysis of capitalism. I suspect that it was precisely because of these two factors that Marcel became interested in them and brought them out of the woodwork. Far ahead of their time, they dealt critically with environmental problems and the consequences of motor traffic. Only Murray Bookchin, who was also a member of this group, has not been forgotten because his social ecology influenced the environmental movements of the 1970s and 1980s.

The report of Dutch council communists on the split in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* is a further find published by Marcel.²¹ *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was a small, but intellectually an enormously interesting circle, that existed from 1949 to 1967 and split in 1958. In this documentation the Dutch council communists Cajo Brendel and Theo Maassen report on the reasons for the 1958 split in letter form. French intellectuals and worker militants belonged to this group which later was to have a well-known name, and they discussed topics that had always led to disputes and splits in left movements and organisations: how should the relationship between spontaneity and organisation be determined? Do we need a revolutionary vanguard or should we not intervene in the class struggle, because the emancipation of the working class can only be the work of that class itself?

Of course, the question of how to assess the Russian Revolution and its development also belongs to this canon of disputes. *Socialisme ou Barbarie* is of interest to this day not only because of its debates but also because its ideas influenced the 1968 movement, especially in France.

There are two substantive collaborations with Marcel van der Linden that I do not wish to overlook. In 2008 the IFH held its annual conference on the topic of '1968. A Look at the Protests from a Global Perspective 40 Years Later'.

20 Van der Linden 1999a, pp. 222–37; it was also published in *Anarchist Studies* in 2001.

21 Van der Linden 2007b, pp. 103–27.

The networker, Marcel van der Linden, established contact between the ITH and the Foundation,²² so that we were involved in preparing this ITH-conference.²³ He also brought his global contacts and points of view to the '1968' conference. In 2009 Marcel van der Linden published the anthology *Beyond Marx* in which the Marxist concept of labour and the labour theory of value were discussed and the question was posed of whether it was worth further developing the Marxist approach.²⁴

Marcel van der Linden has been a board member of the Foundation for Social History of the Twentieth Century since 2005 and advises its members on all important issues. From his experience in Amsterdam he is appreciative of the value of a library and an archive to a scientific facility. Yet he can also appreciate the efforts required to make these archives accessible in economically difficult times. In the past two decades it has often been a balancing act for the Foundation for Social History to preserve its quite large library, collections and archive and at the same time to publish research findings and publications that, in the last instance, merely justify these efforts. In this situation, which has not always been easy, Marcel has always been on our side, taken time for us and not spared travelling in order to steer the boat of the Foundation for Social History with us through occasionally choppy waters. That we were able to celebrate heartily with him following long meetings and discussions, after hard work, made things easier too. We thank our companion, friend and adviser for his long-lasting support.

22 On Marcel van der Linden's important role in the ITH, cf. the essay by David Mayer und Berthold Unfried in this volume.

23 Ebbinghaus, Henninger and van der Linden (eds.) 2009.

24 van der Linden and Roth (eds.) 2009.

PART 2

Field and Case Studies



Slaveries and the Enslaved in Spanish America: Thoughts on the ‘World Working Class’ in a Historical Global Perspective*

Michael Zeuske

Introduction: Female Slaves, Slavery in the Americas, the ‘World Working Class’ and Capital Accumulation in the Atlantic

Male and female slaves have been discussed in connection with a global history of the world labour force for some time. In global world history there were not only female workers in Europe – the origin of the history of working people, which is rather a history of ‘white men’ in modernity since the middle of the nineteenth century – but everywhere. Until around 1880 this workforce was predominantly made up of people working en masse as slaves; it is still not quite clear whether this is also the case today (it depends on how slavery is defined – a legal definition in accordance with ‘Roman law’ makes little sense).¹

In Latin America, there was a particularly large number of female workers, captured in Africa, who lived in a state of slavery and who had to experience globalisation and forced mobility long before their European counterparts did (i.e., the Spanish and Portuguese colonials in Southern and Central America, which today form large parts of the Caribbean and Brazil). Alongside Portugal and Brazil, with its quasi-colony Angola (Brazil was a Portuguese colony until 1822, Angola until 1974) Spain and its colonies in America even accounted for the longest running, and most territorially expansive, history of slavery with the most slaves (of the roughly 11.5 million people who reached America alive, around 6–7 million of them arrived in the Iberian colonies of America).²

* First published in German as ‘Versklavte und Sklavereien in Spanisch-Amerika. Gedanken zur “Weltarbeiterklasse” in globaler Perspektive’, *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 1 (2014), pp. 5–37. The article was translated for this volume in March 2015 by Ben Lewis.

1 Cf. Van der Linden 2003a; Van der Linden 2007d, pp. 260–79; van der Linden and Roth 2013; Van der Linden 2008; Gabaccia and Hoerder (eds.) 2011; Zeuske 2013; Hoerder and Kaur (eds.) 2013; Zeuske 2015, pp. 280–301.

2 Cf. Salmoral 1996; Salmoral 2005; de Alencastro 2000.

Until recently, there has been a fixation on national history in Germany and Central Europe. Global history has had a hard time and in part still does.³ Works which go beyond this perspective are mainly concerned with the Anglo-American area or directly concern the USA and the Anglo-American Atlantic. That is why I want to concentrate here on Africa (the African Atlantic), the Iberian and the Spanish-American area (today's Latin America) and the Atlantic (or Atlântico Sul).

The Medieval Roots of Globality and Mobility

Globality and mobility are considered to be the most important and most dynamic elements of modernity (by which is usually meant the period from 1880 onwards). But the history of mobility is longer than this. Forms of kin slavery (slavery within the framework of a living or kinship group, however defined), slavery based on war victims and slavery based on prisoners of war already existed in all societies of the Atlantic basin before the fifteenth century. In other territories, there were also the beginnings of intensive economic slavery and the long-distance trading of slaves. The world's largest slave-trading systems with extreme forms of forced mobility could be found in the thirteenth century between Mongols and Mamluks (between the Crimea and Egypt), on the Indian ocean, on the Indian subcontinent towards Central Asia and Persia, from Sudan, the Southern border of the Sahara and in East Africa towards the North. Before 1492, a wide variety of types and forms of slavery could also be found.⁴ Since Roman and Visigoth times, domestic slavery has played a key role in Castile, Andalusia, Aragon and Valencia. Later, particularly in Almeria, Seville, Denia and the Catalanian Levante, there were platforms of Mediterranean trade in male prisoners of war (*sakaliba*) and eunuchs. From this perspective, the Carolingian Empire around 800 and that of Charles 'the Great' in Western and Central Europe were monarchies of slave hunters and traders, similar to the seventeenth-century monarchies in Sudanese West Africa and West Central Africa (Ghana, Mali, Songhay, the Futa and Ashanti states, Dahomey, Oyo, Angola, Matamba, etc.)⁵ The tradition of long-distance trade in male slaves, as well as that of slave raids, also remained intact in the late and final

3 There are, of course, exceptions – I need only mention the work of Wolfgang Reinhard, Horst Pietschmann, Jürgen Osterhammel, Matthias Middell, Sebastian Conrad or Dirk Hoerder.

4 Cf. Zeuske 2012, pp. 87–111; Zeuske 2012a.

5 Cf. McCormick 2001; McCormick 2002, pp. 17–54.

phases of the Iberian Reconquista (thirteenth century to the fifteenth century) in the Christian territories. Furthermore, in Southern Spain local forms of urban slavery were widespread (particularly in Seville and the port cities), which included work in gardening and in small-scale agriculture, but not yet in 'large' latifundia agriculture.⁶ The long tradition of slavery on the Iberian Peninsula also led to the early emergence of a legal tradition which, under Roman and Arab-Islamic influence, amounted to the integration of male and female domestic slaves.⁷

Since the Northern Atlantic slavery of the Vikings (c. 8th/11th century), between 1400 and 1880, a new global slave-trade system emerged on the Atlantic, which initially, until 1640, was dominated solely by the Iberians, who were nonetheless regularly attacked by pirates and corsairs. In contrast to Portugal, with its colonies, Guinea, Brazil and Angola, until 1800 Spain – with a few important exceptions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – hardly played a role in this transatlantic slave trade between West Africa and Europe (from around 1440 on) and between West Africa and America (since 1493 the 'Iberian Atlantic' / Atlântico Sul).⁸ This fundamentally changed after 1815 (British abolitionist policies) but especially after Spain forfeited all of its mainland colonies in former Spanish America (South, Central and North America) as well as Luisianas (Louisiana, 1804) and Florida (1810–17) in the 'Independencia' (1810–25).⁹ Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Spanish Guinea (Fernando Poo and Rio Muni/Equatorial Guinea) and Ifni made up the rest of the Spanish Empire.¹⁰ Between 1808 and 1874 Spain itself was torn by military revolts, revolutions, riots, civil wars and coups. The salvation of liberal Spain was slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico and the 'hidden Atlantic' in human trafficking (like the 'African Empire' – slaveries and slave trafficking for Portugal). Despite republican attempts (1820–3; 1868–74), the Isabelline Monarchy (1834–68) and the monarchy in general could only survive with the help of the plunder from the colonies, a massive transatlantic and Caribbean trafficking operation and the most modern slave-, plantation- and export-economy complexes.¹¹ These complexes came into existence in Cuba in particular (Western Cuba, called 'Cuba grande') and in the South and the East of Puerto Rico (1815–50). Initially,

6 Cf. Cortes 1964; Silva 1979; Stella 2000; Garda 2000, pp. 59–85; Garda 2000a.

7 Cf. Phillips Jr. 1989; Phillips Jr. 1991, pp. 43–61; Blackburn 1997, pp. 65–102; Parise 2008; Casares and Barranco (eds.) 2011, pp. 13–24; Casares 2012.

8 Cf. Alencastro 2000, *passim*; Borucki, Eltis and Wheat 2015, pp. 433–61.

9 Cf. Rinke 2010.

10 Cf. Fradera 2005.

11 Cf. Ibid.

this took place in the coffee and sugar economy and, following the construction of Latin America's first railway, particularly in the booming production of white sugar for export. In 1820, under pressure from Great Britain, the Spanish crown had to officially prohibit the Atlantic slave trade.

Secretly it was allowed to continue. Between 1820 and 1878 a completely new Atlantic, a 'hidden Atlantic', emerged. This was a gigantic transcultural slave-trade, accumulation and job machine, which stretched from the interior of Africa, over the Atlantic, through to the areas of operation in the Americas (Africa, the Atlantic, the Americas: AAA).¹² In Africa, raiding warriors captured people; wars, debt, luxury trade and army platoons led to the 'production' of slaves. Trade organisations, merchants and often gigantic transport caravans (across land or rivers) took care of the transport and sale of the captives (*captivos*, *cativos*) to European factors and captains. Only on the Atlantic Ocean were the captured transformed into commodities and 'slaves' in the Euro-Creole 'Roman' legal tradition. At the same time, the bodies of the displaced formed capital, a kind of 'world money' and a basis of credit (and thereby the 'hidden' basis of the emerging financial systems of Western Europe from the seventeenth century on). By around 1830, more Africans than Europeans came to the Americas; in around 1750 more than three-quarters of all migrants came from Atlantic Africa.¹³ This transatlantic capture en masse, euphemistically known as 'passage', instituted a gigantic accumulation of capital on the basis of human bodies. The bodies of those captured were in the first instance capital, which became a 'commodity' through commodification.¹⁴ Male and female labouring slaves were, and remained, not just capital, they also produced surplus value themselves (as the values, or value equivalents, for which they had been exchanged, bought or the values which needed to be called on for their capture – which often had to happen relatively quickly). They also produced more and more value, especially in the cultivation of settlements and land as well as on the plantations (*ingenios*, *cafetales*, *vegas*, *haciendas*) where they worked as mining slaves, domestic slaves, state slaves (*emancipados*), guards, coachmen and cooks. Even the staff (or personnel) of the slave trade – such as cooks, seamen, translators, cabin boys or guards on slave ships – contributed to the accumulation and maintenance of capital. This was also true of female slaves in their role as mothers to the slave children.

12 Cf. Zeuske 2013.

13 Cf. Eltis 1999, pp. 25–49, here p. 28f. (Table 1); Lewis and Sokoloff (eds.) 2004.

14 Cf. Lindsay 2007.

As capital, the enslaved provided the basis for all other capital forms (particularly money and property capital, as well as that invested in new techniques, technology and industry). Slaves were the basis for almost all barter, financial, credit and bond transactions, both in the plantation societies of Spanish-America and Brazil, but also in their hinterland economies.¹⁵ Alongside their role as human-body capital, the enslaved, as female and male workers and as service providers, were the main source of productivity. Even the most condensed idea of a 'world working class' would always have to first of all think of female slaves, 'invisible' rural and mining slaves, enslaved children, debt slaves and coolies until around 1850/60 (perhaps until 1945), as well as many other types of enslaved labour, the main characteristic of which was not legal norms (although these did exist both in written and oral form) but routine violence on a massive scale against human bodies. On a conceived infrastructure between the interior of Africa (where female and male slaves, in the most varied forms and types of slavery, carried out all the work, guard services, military tasks and reproduction, as well as the raising of children) and the Americas, the enslaved people carried out all kinds of work and were subject to all conceivable forms of violence, objectification (as capital)/commodification, trauma and humiliation.¹⁶ In the conflict zones, young male slaves quickly became members of small armies of slave hunters (slavery raids) and thus facilitated the very 'production' of new masses of the enslaved. Male and female slaves grew and harvested food, they wove and produced fabrics, worked in mines and with livestock, built houses, paths and streets and conducted all transport and dock work. They also worked as domestic services (particularly as cooks and water carriers).

Between these labour tasks, which I characterise as 'African' in a somewhat essentialist manner (such work was also carried out by captives and slaves which had been exchanged with or sold to Europeans and Americans in the slave factories and slave-trading venues) and the Atlantic, there were also the castings conducted by European-American doctors and captains (including officers) to ascertain whether those enslaved in Africa met the health and bodily requirements of the large slave traders (who mainly were based in European or American ports and ran 'respectable' merchant companies). Only after they had passed through this filter of force, which was monitored by the doctors, did those captured arrive naked on the ships of the Atlantic system dominated by the Europeans and the Americans. Until around 1850, the enslaved of the

15 Cf. Adelman 2006.

16 Cf. Zeuske 2013a, pp. 69–104.

Atlantic made up the largest pool of potential female and male workers. After these, the largest and most important group of formally 'free' wage labourers in the translocal marine market economy at the end of the eighteenth century consisted of three to four thousand men in the European countries bordering on the Atlantic alone. They were sailors and support staff. Many of these workers came from the hinterlands in the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁷ Alongside the sailors, the Atlantic Creoles, who in first origin were mainly the descendants of European fathers and African mothers, formed an enormous group of people who lived on the Atlantic and its shores, mainly as brokers, navigators, healers, translators, guards, rowers and cabin boys with experience in the tropics. It is impossible to say which of the two groups, the sailors or the quasi-enslaved Atlantic Creoles (who could often also be found amongst pirates and corsairs) formed the largest group of the world working class outside of agriculture by around 1850. Only after the crisis of the nineteenth century (in connection with the 1848 revolutions) did the national workforces in the industrialising nations of the later 'North' come even close to such figures. Moreover, until around 1940 the number of coolies (still just as much of a kind of slavery) was still greater, with around 2.5 million people captured between 1846 and 1920 (I refer also to the estimates for the 'other slavery' of the indigenous enslaved in the Americas – 2.5–5 million between 1500 and 1900).¹⁸

The majority of those captured came from India and China. The enslaved had to work on ships. Women and children had to mainly work as cleaners, service providers (including sexual services) and in food preparation; a few of the enslaved men worked in the distribution of food, as supervisors and also in decking and loading work. After landing in America's ports, which were monitored by sailors, Atlantic creoles and colonial authorities and doctors, the slaves were sold and marched to their buyers. Some of them came to the elites as 'domestic slaves'. The term 'domestic slavery' sounds innocent, yet urban slavery meant all kinds of domestic, transport, ferrying and building work, all of which was dirty and degrading (gravediggers, hangmen, assistants in hospitals, sewer workers). Others made it to the mines, particularly the diamond and gold mines in Minas Gerais and Ouro Preto in Brazil, as well as the gold, emerald and platinum mines in what was then New Granada (roughly today's Colombia) and the copper mines in Cuba. Other groups were deployed as state slaves in the building of fortifications, ports and streets and, from 1840, railways too. They were also used as male and female rural workers in all forms of agricul-

17 Cf. Frykman 2009, 67–93.

18 Cf. Christopher, Pybus and Rediker (eds.) 2007; McKeown 2004, pp. 155–90; McKeown 2010, pp. 95–124; Reséndez 2016.

ture. The latter in particular had to carry out extremely difficult routine work on the sugar, cocoa, cotton, coffee and indigo plantations, but also had to work in rice- and tobacco-growing areas, in salt production and in rearing all kinds of livestock. The actual productivity of slave labour was rooted in large agriculture. Plantations, especially their industrialised forms, like the mechanised *ingenio* (sugar plantations) in Cuba, were linked to the rest of the world by railway lines and steamship routes. They were tropical, colonial centres of industry with all forms of intensive, pre-Fordian labour organisation: shift work, day and night work, the full-time employment of women, welfare institutions (a kind of kindergarten) as well as 'housing' (*barracones*) on the plantations, small gardens (*conucos*) for 'faithful' male and female slaves, intensive pastoral care (their own chaplains and cemeteries), infirmaries, carers and doctors both on the ships and on the plantations. Not for nothing did the plantation zones in Cuba around Havana/Matanzas have, in relative terms, the highest global concentration of physicians in the nineteenth century.

Apart from three or four management functions (administrator, superintendent/Mayoral = CEO-Manager), doctor, caretaker (*mayordomo*) all supervisory and specialist work was carried out by female and male slaves (coachmen, drovers, craftsmen, cooks, healers, male and female servants). Even sugar masters were often slaves. With the export products from this high-output production (brand products in Cuba were white sugar, cigars, rum, coffee and leather) the owners paid off their liabilities and debts and realised surpluses and profits. The workers of the Atlantic Ocean, sailors, captains, officers, surgeons, boat people and Atlantic creoles, sold the products (especially tobacco and rum/cachaça as well as sugar or cocoa) in North America or Europe in order to get access to other commodities, ships or credit for the slave trade. Slave baracoons (prison-like large barracks which were locked at night), slave ships and slave plantations (as well as prisons and armies) were the largest and most important structures and institutions of the violence of labour extortion through control over human bodies.¹⁹

Outside of the Americas, the only comparable production centres on the basis of massive slave labour in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could be found in the Sokoto Caliphate (in the North of today's Nigeria), in Egypt, in the Zulu Sultanate (Philippines) and on the Banda Islands (Indonesia), in Zanzibar/Pemba (and Kilwa), in Madagascar and some islands in the Indian Ocean and in South Africa under European control.

19 Cf. Zeuske 2004; Zeuske 2009, pp. 37–57; Zeuske 2010; Hatzky and Schmieder (eds.) 2010; Zeuske, *Cuba grande. Geschichte der Sklavinnen und Sklaven auf Kuba* (forthcoming).

Returning directly to Spain and its colonies, none of this of course occurred via a direct connection between economic structures and processes and political forms (such as the monarchy). The connection between liberal monarchies, colony and slavery as well as slave smuggling is underpinned by the emergence of a transcultural group of slave traders and slave owners, who organised themselves as an extremely conservative-christian group in the Spanish Empire between the slave-trading centres of Africa, Havana/Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Madrid, Barcelona, Cadiz and Seville. The most powerful and important representatives of this Spanish transatlantic oligarchy had Spanish high aristocratic titles and, at the same time, were politically the most important representatives of Hispanic fundamentalism (an ideology which aimed at the preservation of a Catholic empire and a Spanish Cuba).²⁰ Many of them carried out banking functions for the sugar plantation economy (*refacción*) as the privileged heads of large trading houses and, from 1850, often took over entire coffee and sugar plantations as part of the process of capital-intensive modernisation. After prolonged anti-colonial revolutions had broken out in Cuba and Puerto Rico (1868–98), they gradually transferred the capital that had been created on the basis of human bodies, mainly of course in money or other value forms, to Spain (particularly to Catalonia).

Banks, steam ship fleets, entire neighbourhoods, architecture and urban silhouettes (like Barcelona) came into existence on the basis of this capital (in its origins capital of human bodies), as well as some of the greatest fortunes in the Atlantic (those of Pedro Blanco, Zulueta, Tomás Terry, Marqueses de Comillas).²¹ This slaving complex of Spanish and Spanish-American history has ensured that, in contemporary Spanish historiography works on the smuggling of slaves, slave traders and the nineteenth-century *Atlántico Oculto* (the hidden Atlantic) are, with very few exceptions,²² non-existent. This is particularly the case when it comes to slave holders. Research on slavery is either assigned to the area of 'Americanismo' or remains at the level of legal histories which basically refer back to the Thomistic principle of 'mild slavery', mentioned above, over and over again. Most Spanish-speaking authors located, and still locate, the actual 'hard' forms of 'capitalist slavery' amongst the English, the Huguenots, the Americans and the Dutch.²³ Over the past 20 years, only in Madrid (Consejo

20 Cf. Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara 2010.

21 Cf. Ely 1963; Magro and Fernandez 1992; Lopez 2009, pp. 127–58; Piqueras 2011; Alharilla 2013, pp. 93–119.

22 Cf. Arnalte 2001 and the works cited in footnote 21.

23 Cf. Vilar 1977; Anoveros 2000, pp. 57–84; Andres-Gallego and Anoveros 2002, Andres-Gallego 2005; an opposite position is presented by Schmieder 2003, pp. 115–132, and Piqueras 2011.

Superior de Investigaciones Científicas/CSIC, Superior Council for Scientific Research) as well as Valencia/Castellon and Barcelona, and partially in Seville, have strong research centres come into existence which engage both with slavery in Cuba and also with an analysis of slave resistance.²⁴

In contrast to the late development in the former mother country, Cuba – which was only able to free itself from direct colonial status in 1898, but immediately came under the neo-colonial influence of the USA – was the country where the first world historical and cultural historical work on slaves and slavery was carried out.²⁵ This rather cultural-historical post-colonialism ‘before post-colonialism’, as well as its structuralist slavery research, are the highlights of national historiography.²⁶ This is also true of, and about, Puerto Rico. One of the strongest and most independent traditions of slavery research can be found in Colombia, while in Venezuela, where the first successful plantation society in Spanish America was based, slavery research is mainly assigned to the discipline of anthropology. National historiography considers it to be marginal. Things are similar in the other national historiographies of Latin America.²⁷

The Iberian Origins of Atlantic Slavery

From a world-historical point of view, Atlantic slavery and Atlanticification (the whole complex of capital accumulation, transport and commodification in the Atlantic area) were something new. During its peak between 1600 and 1888, its basic characteristic elements (*engenhos* [plantations]; ship fleets; slave ships; slavery of the rural masses; the huge delivery of captured human bodies by merchants and captains as well as a huge army of support staff) emerged as part of Iberian expansion into the Atlantic with the assistance of African-Iberian alliances along the coast of West Africa. It all began very selectively. Between 1490 and 1530, the Portuguese had to focus on the Cape Verde Islands and São Tomé.²⁸ With the redefinition of the concept of slavery in line with ‘Roman’ law, from the thirteenth century onwards the Iberian and Italian captains in particular were using antique geographical knowledge (Ptolemy in 1406, Strabo in 1470) to begin to explore the maritime space between South

24 Cf. Lavina and Ruiz-Peinado 2006 and the works cited in the footnotes 21 and 22.

25 Cf. Saco 1877/78; Ortiz 1906; Ortiz 1916.

26 Cf. Moreno 1978.

27 Cf. Saignes 1984[1967]; Diaz 1994, pp. 11–29; Zeuske 2006, pp. 9–20.

28 Cf. Alencastro 2000; Zeuske 2006.

Portugal and North-West Morocco and to expand their expeditions. They were looking for gold and luxury goods, particularly spices. Only in 1460 did something along the lines of a 'project for the circumnavigation of Africa' emerge from this, financed by the trade in prisoners of war. The Iberians encountered the most varied types and forms of slavery throughout the circumatlantic area. The traditional elements of these raiding wars and kidnapping were short-term financing, private business operations, the replenishment of crews and the abduction of young men who were trained as interpreters (*lenguas*). The Treaty of Alcáçovas (1469) kept the coasts of sub-Saharan Africa from Castile. Instead it was promised to the Canary Isles. Since 1477, the captains had initially been engaged in intense slave raids amongst the Guanches, the original inhabitants of the Canary Isles. The Guanche prisoners of war came to Seville and other port cities. As a result of the massive resistance on the part of the Africans (war canoes, complicated coasts) the Portuguese had to stop the raids on sub-Saharan coasts as early as 1460; the Canaries were conquered in 1495. From that point on, captains in Africa were offered '*cativos*' in particular (prisoners of the wars in Africa in which the Iberians participated on one side). The Southern Iberian port cities, especially Lisbon and Seville, were filled with black slaves (*negros*).²⁹ Christianised black slaves had been coming to America since the voyages of Christopher Columbus and the beginning of the Conquista von La Española (today Haiti/the Dominican Republic). The first probably came before the first written record of them in 1502. Yet the only territories on the West African coasts which were really dominated by the Portuguese, namely the Cape Verdean island of Santiago (Riveira Grande) and São Tomé, were filled with even more black *cativos* than in the Southern Iberian port cities. The mass trade of *cativos* was theoretically a royal monopoly, but soon it was also under the control of '*Lançados*', Iberian men and monopoly breakers who married into African social associations. Their descendants became *tangomãos* – multilingual culture brokers who were proud of their 'mulatto' origins but who often oriented themselves towards the cultures of their (African) mothers and relatives. The first Atlantic Creoles came from amongst their number. They began to organise the smuggling of slaves into the Caribbean from around 1500.

For Columbus and the first Andalusian captains who crossed the Atlantic from East to West, the Canaries were the actual point of departure, not the Portuguese Iberians in West Africa, which were based on Cape Verde and São

29 Cf. Cabrera 1982; Cunliffe 2001; Fernandez-Armesto 1982, Fernandez-Armesto 1987; Martinez 2012.

Tomé. Columbus found a new 'sea island' (*mar de islas*)³⁰ in the Caribbean; he conducted himself there as a slave hunter and trader in the 'Canarian tradition', but also drew on his experiences in West Africa (he had visited El Mina in today's Ghana).³¹ In fact, the slave conception of Columbus, the first captain and settler, consisted of creating a 'Guinea a la São Tomé' in the Caribbean with Indians as *cativos*. With Columbus, a massive and direct enslavement of the Indian peoples began in 1494, which could only be brought under control in 1550.

The crown repeatedly attempted to stop direct Indian slavery either through bans or by transforming the '*repartimiento*' of prisoners of war (in the beginning the 'distribution' of Indians and Indias who had survived the respective local Conquista) into state-controlled forms of forced labour (*encomienda*, rotating forms of conscription like *mita* in silver mining). Yet its definition of the '*caribe*' ('man-eating, resistant Indian') nonetheless left a loophole open for direct Indian slavery, as it did for the toleration of adapted forms of Indian domestic slavery (such as *naboria*), which in the periphery had survived as raid slavery and domestic slavery into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Caribbean depopulated.

Citing the so-called 'demographic disaster' over and over again (meaning the collapse of the population in the Americas from an estimated 65 million in 1492 to around 5 million in 1550) is a *topos* which excuses slavery. The Caribbean also depopulated, in fact particularly so, because of the massive slave raids and the attempt to establish a huge slave trade in '*Indios*' à la Columbus.³² The repopulation of the Caribbean and the flat shores of the tropical and subtropical Americas occurred through a massive trade in those captured from Africa, with the result that in around 1825 Alexander von Humboldt could talk of 83 percent of the population of the Caribbean consisting of blacks and their descendants.³³

Imperial Spain and the First Iberian Atlantic (1520–1650)

Until around 1550, *cativos* in particular were transported by smugglers and Portuguese ships from African coastal areas via the intermediate stations on

30 Cf. Kolumbus 2001.

31 Cf. Consuelo Varela 1988, pp. 44–68; Vieira 2004, pp. 42–84; Schwartz 2009, pp. 14–40; Centro de Estudos de Historia do Atlântico (ed.), 1992, pp. 126–9.

32 Caballos 1997; Caballos 2000; Caballos 2000a; Caballos 2000b; Reséndez 2016.

33 Cf. Zeuske 2006, p. 313; Zeuske 2008, pp. 257–77.

the islands controlled by the Iberians (especially Cape Verde and São Tomé, but also the Canaries and Madeira); only around 43,000 made it to South-West Europe.

Since around 1500, demand arose for African slaves on the other side of the Atlantic due to the discovery of gold in the Caribbean. This demand was reinforced by the extermination of the Indian/Arawak population, which had become evident by around 1510. Yet captains, Atlantic creoles and slave traders were now already smuggling people directly between Africa and Santo Domingo. The smuggling must have been so widespread that even though both Iberian crowns allowed the direct trade in people between Africa and America, they simultaneously also sought to monopolise it in the form of '*licencias*' (monopoly licences; it was nonetheless permitted to pass on the papers) and later '*asientos*' (a kind of monopoly between the Spanish crown and merchants, groups or states).

The first plantation economy with black slaves in the Americas was in the West of Santo Domingo, near to Azua (1520–70).³⁴ Official trade was organised in various bureaucratic forms which could always be verified in writing (*licencias* 1533–95, centralised *asientos* 1595–1763, later on monopoly companies as well). While this limited smuggling, it did not see it peter out – quite the opposite.³⁵ By 1650, slightly more than 250,000 African slaves had arrived in the Spanish colonial territories as forced labourers, particularly in Lima (urban slavery and agriculture), Potosi (domestic slavery) and Mexico (initially in silver mining and the sugar industry) as well as in the port towns where trade was permitted (Cartagena / Portobello Panamá-Guayaquil-El Callao, Veracruz and, from 1580, Buenos Aires). They also came to other gold-mining cities and areas (especially New Granada). Between 1595 and 1640 alone, the period of the union of the crown between Spain and Portugal, 135,000 African slaves were captured and taken to Cartagena, the American main slave port, 70,000 to Veracruz, 19,644 to Havana, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico and 44,000 through the American 'back door' of Buenos Aires. Most of the latter group came to Peru.³⁶ Between 1580 and 1620 the 'Portuguese' (New Christians, Sephardim, Atlantic creoles) acquired a strong influence, which they used to directly exchange African slaves for precious metals in and around Cartagena de Indias. For this reason, a court of the inquisition was established there in 1610 in

34 De la Fuente 2004, pp. 115–57.

35 Vilar 1997, p. 167; Böttcher 1995, pp. 154–67; Perez Garcia and Fernandez Chaves 2009, pp. 597–622.

36 Cf. Vilar 1997, p. 226; Bowser 1972; Mendes 2008, pp. 63–94; Newson and Minchin (eds.) 2007.

order to destroy *judaizantes* (relapsing New Christians who were suspected of secretly being Jews).³⁷ In the first place, these slaves came from Senegambien and from 1570 the majority of them came from Luanda (Ndongo/Angola) and the Kingdom of Congo. They usually did not come directly, but via the Cape Verde islands or São Tomé, where the first forms of Creole languages and Atlantic-Creole culture emerged. In the Caribbean, transcultural forms of life also quickly emerged, with escaping black slaves joining forces with resistant *Indios*.³⁸ *Cimarrones* (escaped slaves; maroons in English),³⁹ *cimarronaje* (the fleeing of slaves) and settlements of maroons (*palenques*, *cumbes*, *rochelas*; also *mocambos* and *quilombos* due to the influence of Central West Africa) formed aspects of a Creole way of life in the Caribbean⁴⁰ and established the general tendency towards transculturation.

On the extremely long transport routes between the West African islands and the slave ports of Spanish America, slave enclaves formed through smuggling and the direct exchange of sought-after goods like cocoa and Brazil wood (*pau brasil*). This was particularly the case in Pernambuco, Bahia, São Salvador de Bahia (from around 1570) and in the coastal valleys of modern-day Venezuela (from 1600), where above all cocoa was produced.

Since 1620 the Dutch had been carrying out heavy attacks on these enclaves, especially Pernambuco, and settled there between 1630 and 1654, where they took over the Portuguese slave trade (as well as ports in Africa like El Mina and, temporarily, São Tomé and Luanda) and local slavery economies.⁴¹

For the Spanish settlers in the New World who demanded elite status, one important criterion was always the extent to which the crown and the local authorities allowed them access to the Atlanticisation (accumulation through the Atlantic slave trade). If the crown's monopoly claims were strictly enforced, then they always resorted to smuggling, including the smuggling of slaves. In turn, this threatened the integrity of Spanish-American territories, with the result that in the central smuggling zones (especially Eastern Cuba and West-Española (today's Haiti)) the crown felt compelled to play the witch against the devil, ordering both resettlements and expulsions in around 1600. This in turn led to the Atlantic's infiltration with Atlantic creoles, fleeing slaves, Indians, buccaneers, filibusters and finally – in the case of the Western part of Santo Domingo – French corsairs and pirates in particular. Similar things

37 Cf. Böttcher 1995, pp. 108–39.

38 Cf. Landers 2000, pp. 30–54.

39 Cf. Arrom 1975; Arrom 1980, pp. 47–62; Arrom and Arevalo 1986.

40 Landers 1997, pp. 84–91; Landers 2000, pp. 30–54.

41 Cf. de Alencastro 2008, pp. 123–44.

happened to the Lesser Antilles and Jamaica, which the Spanish had deemed 'useless'.⁴² Some islands became unsinkable platforms of smuggling and the trading of slaves into the Spanish Caribbean and the mainland colonies (e.g. Curaçao/Netherlands in 1634 and Saint Thomas/Denmark in 1666). Other islands became production platforms for sought-after tropical export products (cash crops), especially tobacco and sugar (Barbados, Jamaica, Martinique and Guadalupe, later Saint-Domingue in particular). They became points of departure for North-West European colonial empires, also because they were associated with mainland enclaves in South America (Guyana, Surinam, Cayenne, the Atlantic side of the Central America) and North America (Virginia in 1608, Louisiana in 1690).

Until 1580 the bulk of slaves went to Spanish America. Then, between 1600 and 1670, Brazil took the lead.⁴³

Bourbon Spain, the Atlântico Sul (Portugal-Brazil) and the Anglo-Atlantic (1650–1789/1808)

From around 1650 there was a large-scale restructuring of slavery in the Atlantic. Portugal dissolved from Spain in 1640 and entered into a long-term alliance with England, which was primarily directed against Castile. The victory of the Angolans and that of the Portuguese/Brazilians in the Battle of Mbwila in Southern Congo (1665) put an end to the centralised Empire of Congo in West Central Africa⁴⁴ and secured Portuguese control over Ndongo/Angola as well as its three slave-export regions (Norte, Luanda and Benguela) with the ports of Cabinda, Ambriz, Luanda and Benguela and their connections with the 'slave-production regions' in the hinterland of Angola (Matamba, Kasanje and Lunda).⁴⁵ The Portuguese-Brazilian-Angolan South Atlantic was formed. The gold and diamond deposits (especially Minas Gerais, Ouro Preto) discovered during the slave-hunting crusades of the *Bandeirantes* (bands of slave raiding warriors) became the centre of a slave trade and slavery empire in the South Atlantic, flanked by rural slaverries in the North East (Bahia, Recife, Pernambuco), urban slaverries of black people in Rio as well as mixed slaverries in other regions.

42 Cf. Paquette and Engermann (eds.) 1996.

43 Cf. Klein 2004, pp. 201–36; Adelman 2006, pp. 58–64; Zeuske 2008a, pp. 71–157; Klein and Luna 2010.

44 Cf. Thornton 1988, pp. 360–78; Thornton 1998; Thornton 1999.

45 Cf. Ferreira 2012.

Between 1650 and 1808 Spain was more oriented towards the Anglo-Atlantic, which was predominantly formed by the advance of the Dutch, English and French in the Caribbean as well as on the Gold Coast, Slave Coast and Calabar coast (today's South-Eastern Nigeria). In the Spanish War of Succession (1700–14) Bourbon Spain had initially handed the Asiento colonies, which had served to supply slaves to its 'overseas kingdoms', to Bourbon France. With the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) the Asiento de Negros passed to Great Britain for 30 years. The Asiento was accompanied by a massive smuggling of slaves and was often interrupted. The longest interruption came from the 'Guerra de Asiento' (1739–48). In 1750 The Treaty of Madrid dissolved the Asiento with Great Britain. On the one hand, it was assigned to the Spanish (in 1765 to the Aguirre trading house, Aristegui y Compañía, which functioned as the Compañía Gaditana del Asiento between 1772/73 and 1779 and often bought slaves from the British or the French). On the other hand, the Spanish monopoly companies like the Compañía Guipuzcoana, since 1728, or the Compañía de la Habana, since 1740, had already been granted slave-trading rights and licences.

According to Spanish law, full slaves had to be of a certain age and body size. Men between 16 and 30 who fulfilled these criteria were considered to be *pieza de Indias* (roughly, 'India-pieces') and were sold for high prices; women and older men, children and adolescents were judged by this standard, as were the prices they fetched.⁴⁶ Slaves ought to have already been baptised, preferably in Africa, and were branded twice: once by the slave trader (factor) in Africa and once on their arrival by the colonial officials. In 1789 the crown declared the slave trade to be free trade for all Spaniards. Between 1808 and 1810 slave ships set sail, usually from Cuba, bearing a 'neutral' American flag.

Since the era of the Bourbon reforms, Spain had also attempted to standardise the legal framework for the nascent mass slavery of African labour. At first the 'Codigo Negro Carolino' (1784) was developed for the Caribbean, which was essentially conceived as a test case for the development of Spanish Santo Domingo. From 1789 a new code was in circulation, called in short the 'Codigo Negro Español', which was supposed to apply to all Spanish overseas territories and to combine the principles of the Enlightenment with the massive expansion of the Atlantic slave trade and mass slavery, as desired by businesses and

46 Fernando Ortiz provides a working definition of the 'pieza de Indias' ideal type: 'El esclavo tipo era el varon o hembra de quince a treinta anos, sano, bien conformado y con la dentadura completa, el cual recibia el nombre de pieza de Indias' [The typical slave was a man or woman of between 15 and 30 years of age, healthy, well-built with a full set of teeth. They were given the name 'Pieza de Indias']; cf. Ortiz 1975, p. 133; also cf. Ortiz 1975, p. 168f.

the state. Yet it never came into effect because of the protests on the part of the slave owners and the slave revolution in Saint Dominique between 1791 and 1803.⁴⁷

Slaveries in Spanish America

Male and female slaves did all the work in colonial America. In Spanish America, both slavery and the internal trading of slaves were already widespread in 1650. This was also, and especially, the case in territories and cities within South America and in the Antilles – slaves were bought and sold in their millions, there were mortgage and credit transactions in which slaves constituted the collateral and there were also urban slaveries (slaves often playing an important role as capital protection for their owners). Black slaves working in the household, services, craft and transport sectors – as well as in construction and mining – were key segments of the economy and society. Direct forms of Indian slavery survived in the peripheries. Jeremy Adelman has developed the fortunate phrase ‘slave hinterlands’⁴⁸ for the whole complex of slaveries in Spanish America and has shown that the confrontation between the slave-trade monopoly and ‘free trade’ (the accumulation of capital, Atlanticisation) became one of the important motivations for the Spanish-American elites in the Americas in their rebellion against the imperial elites in Spain around 1808/1810.

Masses of black and other slaves gathered in the large cities, especially in the ports of Havana, Veracruz, Acapulco, the Cartagena/Panama, Caracas/La Guaira, Buenos Aires, Montevideo⁴⁹ as well as in the mining-slavery regions of Minas Gerais, New Granada/ Popayán/ Choco, New Spain, El Cobre/Cuba.

The first major rural slaveries in continental Spanish America arose in the cultivation of cocoa and tobacco in Venezuela as well as in agriculture and viticulture on the Pacific coast in Peru.

In the Antilles, the tradition of rural slavery from the sixteenth century had never been completely demolished, especially not in Cuba. Nonetheless, there was a new upswing through the adoption of new techniques, property forms, technologies and modes of organisation from the English and French Caribbean.

47 Cf. Konetzke 1958–62, pp. 643–52 (Document number 308); Cf. Real Cedula sobre educacion, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos (also Reglamento para la educacion, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos), Aranjuez, 31 de mayo de 1789, in Salmoral 1966, pp. 279–84 (Apendice num. 4).

48 Cf. Adelman 2006; Reséndez 2016.

49 Cf. Bernand 2001; Zequeira 2003.

Some of the attempts at establishing plantation colonies were thwarted either by Indian resistance, the climate or imperial conflicts (such as those in Florida or Louisiana under Spanish rule between 1763 and 1804/1819). All of these rural slaveries were spatially characterised by the fact that until 1800 they revolved around selective solutions for the enclaves and small islands (seen from a global perspective, they existed only on small coastal plains or small islands).

Of the roughly 12 million male and female slaves abducted from Africa to the Americas between 1500 and 1878, around 4 million came to Brazil, 2.05 million to Spanish America, 2.01 million to the British Caribbean (of which 400,000 came to British North America and the USA), 1.6 million to the French West Indies (including Cayenne) and 500,000 to the Dutch West Indies (including Suriname) and 28,000 to the Danish colonies.⁵⁰ Around half of all these worked on sugar plantations (until 1800 particularly in Brazil and the English/French Caribbean; after 1800 around 500,000 worked in the Spanish Caribbean). Two million were active in coffee plantations, domestic and transport slavery respectively (they also worked as guards). A million slaves toiled in mines (especially in Brazil and New Granada/Columbia), 500,000 in cotton fields and 250,000 in coffee plantations (particularly in Venezuela) and in construction.⁵¹ For the territories of contemporary states in former Spanish America, estimates for the number of slaves from Africa are as follows: Mexico 200,000; Cuba 780,000; Puerto Rico 77,000; Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) 30,000; Central America 21,000; Ecuador, Panama and Columbia 200,000; Venezuela 121,000; Peru 95,000, Bolivia and Rio de la Plata (today's Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) 100,000 and Chile 6,000.⁵² Other estimates, which also include smuggling, suggest much higher numbers.

In the Spanish-American independence movements between 1810 and 1830, in most territories the Atlantic slave trade was forbidden right from the outset, but not slavery. Later on, as in the case of Simon Bolivar in 1816, the abolition of slavery was often decreed for military reasons (all able-bodied men were to serve in the army). Although, in the process of the institutionalisation of the new states, laws of '*ventre libre*' (free womb = the child of a female slave was free under the law) were passed, slavery was mainly retained under a different name and with changes in detail (*manumisión*). As a result of the

50 Cf. Thomas 1997, p. 806 (Appendix Three: Estimated Statistics, p. 805f.); see the latest numbers and estimations of the Atlantic slave trade to Spanish America: Borucki, Eltis and Wheat 2015, pp. 433–61.

51 Cf. Thomas 1997, p. 805 Appendix Three: Estimated Statistics, p. 805f.

52 Cf. Andres-Gallego 2012, pp. 321–48.

demand for emancipation, in almost all of the new states in Latin America there were serious struggles, civil wars, agrarian rebellions and bloody *caudillo* wars in which slaves took part. Only in the course of these confrontations, in the 1850s, was slavery repealed in the societies without plantation economies. There were a few exceptions to this, such as in Chile, Central America and Mexico, where slavery was outlawed in 1823, 1824 and 1829 respectively. In many countries, former male and female slaves remained an important factor in the population, particularly in the nineteenth century. The history and traditions of the Afro-Argentines, the Afro-Peruvians or the Afro-Uruguayans, etc, were only gradually processed.⁵³

The 'Hidden Atlantic' and the 'Second Slavery': Cuba and Puerto Rico

The breakthrough to the 'great' plantation economies of the 'Second Slavery'⁵⁴ in the Spanish colonies first occurred in 1800 in Venezuela, Cuba and Puerto Rico, following the collapse of the global model slave economy that was Saint-Domingue (today's Haiti). This came as a result of the only successful slave revolution in world history (1791–1803) and the decline of the sugar economy in Jamaica around 1830. For Santo Domingo, which had been ceded to France in 1795 (the other part of the island is today's Dominican Republic), the effect of the slave revolution was that the victorious troops occupying the Eastern part of the island proclaimed the abolition of slavery on several occasions (1802, 1822) and in 1822 were more or less able to enforce this abolition as well.⁵⁵ In the fight against the revolutions of independence in Continental Spanish America between 1810 and 1825, the Spanish crown was forced into comprehensive modernising reforms in order to hold onto Cuba and Puerto Rico. The transformation of land tenure into full land-property (with the right of separation) and the clearance of the forest for new plantations were at the centre of these reforms.

Fleeing plantation experts and slaves as well as ex-slaves abducted by the owners came from Spanish America, Saint-Domingue/Haiti, Venezuela, Columbia and Florida to Cuba, which became particularly evident in the development of the coffee-plantation economy with slaves between 1800 and 1850

53 Cf. the maps in Andrews 2004.

54 Cf. Tomich 1988, pp. 103–17.

55 Cf. Turits 2003; Turits 2004, pp. 69–88.

in Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo.⁵⁶ During the revolutions of independence many Spaniards with significant capital also fled to Cuba from the former Spanish mainland colonies.

The new boom economy of the coffee and sugar plantations in Western Cuba around Havana and Matanzas, the 'Cuba grande', found in Francisco de Arango y Parreño (1765–1837) – a friend of Alexander von Humboldt – an ingenious theorist of the American plantation economy with mass slavery. Humboldt himself dealt with the astounding boom in the last remaining Spanish 'crown colony' in his 'Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba'.⁵⁷ In Cuba, hinterland slavery developed into the world's most important, most compact and – according to the criteria of the time – the most modern agrarian slave society, which was nonetheless still characterised by a very large sector of free people of colour (*libres de color*).

The following figures show that the concentration of slaves in the Cuban sector increased more and more, whereas it increasingly declined in domestic slavery.⁵⁸

| Sector | 1841 | | 1862 | |
|--|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | Absolute figures | % | Absolute figures | % |
| Ingenios | 100,000 | 22.91 | 172,671 | 47.73 |
| Cafetales (coffee plantations) | 60,000 | 13.74 | 25,942 | 7.17 |
| Sitios and estancias (small rural estates) | 66,000 | 15.12 | 31,768 | 8.78 |
| Vegas (tobacco farms) | 14,263 | 3.26 | 17,675 | 4.88 |
| Cattle haciendas | – | – | 6,220 | 1.72 |
| Domestic slaves | 196,202 | 44.95 | 75,977 | 21.00 |
| Potreros (special cattle breeding) | – | – | 31,514 | 8.71 |

Despite the official prohibition of the Atlantic slave trade in 1820, following this there quickly emerged social groups of specialised slave traders, slave-ship

⁵⁶ Cf. Jimenez, pp. 16–23.

⁵⁷ Cf. Humboldt 1826, Zeuske 2008.

⁵⁸ According to Institute de Historia de Cuba 1995; Institute de Historia de Cuba 1996; Institute de Historia de Cuba 1998. Here Institute de Historia de Cuba 1995, p. 403, table 51 (several percentage values were recalculated).

captains (*negreros*) and factors (*mongos*), with experience in Africa, as well as large groups of support staff (sailors, healers, food distributors, pilots, translators, guards, rowers, supervisors, slave hunters, etc.) From the 1830s on, a new transatlantic Spanish elite formed from the ranks of the *Negreros* in particular. Amongst these there could be found, on the one hand, many Catalans and, on the other, those from the high nobility who had bought their titles using the profits from trafficking.⁵⁹ The construction of the first railways in 1837 solved Cuba's internal transport problem. In the form of boom cycles, Cuba grande expanded into the flat interior of the island, where the forest was sacrificed to the *Ingenios* and capital of human bodies was above all 'invested' (*fomento*) in the building of sugar plantations (*ingenios*) but also in coffee (*cafetales*) and tobacco plantations, as well as in transport and services. According to official figures, between 1820 and 1880 more than half a million people were captured and sold as slaves in Africa and sent to Cuba, even though the slave trade had been outlawed from the beginning of 1821 and English war ships tracked and stopped Spanish-Cuban slave ships on the Atlantic in order to enforce the international treaties.⁶⁰ The captured slaves who were liberated by British ships (liberated slaves, *emancipados* or *recaptives*) were formally freed by 'Mixed Courts' (also Mixed Commissions; *comisiones mixtas*). These were international courts, made up of British and Spanish judges in Havana and Sierra Leone. However, c. 30,000 of the supposedly liberated slaves were used in Cuba like slaves. These were known as '*emancipados*' ('the emancipated' – a discursive trick which created the impression that they really were liberated slaves); thus while they formally had the title of 'liberated slaves', they added to the 500,000 who had been captured and taken to Cuba as full slaves. As inaccurate as it was when it came to individual details, the Cuban census of 1841 nonetheless showed that at that point there were already more slaves than 'white' Spaniards and Cubans; namely, of the roughly one million people who lived in Cuba, around 43 percent were slaves, 15 percent were free coloured people and around 42 percent were white.⁶¹ In addition, between 1847 and 1874 approximately 125,000–150,000 Chinese coolies (*asiáticos*, *culés*) were brought to Cuba. While they had labour contracts, they were often treated worse than slaves. When it came to the labour force, Cuba was already truly global between around 1850 and 1870!

59 Cf. Zeuske 2009, p. 46.

60 Cf. Marika Sherwood 2007, pp. 178–85.

61 Cf. Zeuske 2004; Zeuske 2015.

Cuba was also considered to be the most important area of the Second Slavery in America and in terms of organisation, structures and yields to be the most modern agricultural country in the world (even until 1950!). Havana became the world capital of sugar. In spite of the treaties with Great Britain on the abolition of the slave trade, the tightening of previous treaties (those of 1817, 1835, 1845), as well as a series of formal Spanish laws to prosecute the slave trade aboard, transatlantic trafficking flourished by the end of the 1870s.⁶²

By about 1870 there had also been something along the lines of industrialisation under colonial conditions, in which the largest and most modern sugar factories of the time produced an internationally branded product on the basis of slave labour: white sugar. Following this, under the pressure of competition from beet sugar, another modernisation ensued, through cost reductions and streamlining of the production process (partly deindustrialisation), in the form of the *centrales*, which were huge factories in the sugar-cane fields, where a semi-finished product (brown sugar) was produced for export to the USA. The sugar industry's main capital, as well as that of the Second Slavery in general, continued to flow from the smuggling of slaves between Africa and Cuba (and from the Caribbean), as well as from the exploitation of slaves. Working conditions on the sugar plantations were extremely tough.

Male and female slaves were able to buy freedom for themselves and their children, also in the form of prepayments (*coartación*) and in the nineteenth century increasingly used positive law to their benefit. ('Positive' law is written law. There is also non-written law, particularly in areas where many people come from different legal cultures.)⁶³ The right to buy freedom was also adhered to in the first collection of laws on slavery, the 'Bando de Gobernacion y Policia de la Isla de Cuba' ('The Pronouncement on Government and the Police on the Island of Cuba') in 1842. It contained a 'reglamento de esclavos' (slave regulations) and an 'Instrucción de Pedaneos' (instructions for district boards).⁶⁴ However, there were repeated escapes (*cimarronaje*) and rebellions. Escape and resistance were in some areas so intense that a new profession was created, the slave hunter (*rancheador*). The slave hunter would accompany specially bred hunting dogs. *Rancheadores* also repeatedly formed slave-hunter militias which, over a long period of time, conducted a guerrilla war against

62 Cf. Zeuske 2009.

63 Cf. Fuente (coordinator) 2004; Varella 2012, pp. 200–10.

64 Cf. Valdes 1973, pp. 316–26; excerpts from the Bando and the Instrucción de Pedaneos in Ortiz 1975, pp. 439–42, 449–52; all three texts are in Bando de Gobernacion y Policia de la Isla de Cuba 1842; Salmoral 1996, pp. 141–59.

settlements of escaped slaves, particularly in the mountainous areas of the island.⁶⁵ However, little more than 5 percent of the slaves and the lower classes engaged in direct resistance.

Cultures and religions of the various ethnic-religious groups, which were continually filled with those captured in Africa (in Cuba they were called '*naciones*' – 'nations'), had a much deeper impact on society than did direct resistance; the most important were *mandingas* (people from today's Senegambia), *minas* (from the Gold Coast, today's Ghana), *lucumis* (Nigeria/Cameroon), *carabalis* (South-East Nigeria/Cameroon) *congós/angolas* (Congo/Angola) as well as *macuas* (Mozambique), often with dozens of sub-categorisations.⁶⁶ Already from the sixteenth century onwards, the descendants of slaves had founded religious brotherhoods (*cofradías*) and, especially in the nineteenth century, estate council assemblies with their own meeting houses (*cabildos de nación*, from 1878 on *sociedades de recreo e instruccion*, societies for recreation and education). These also became nuclei of transculturation, new cults and religious forms – and of trade unions too.⁶⁷

Cuba became a 'milking cow' in what remained of the Spanish Empire: until 1898, the mother country was able to remain within the circle of the great powers on the basis of the colonial surplus product: taxes, levies, duties, *donativos* ('voluntary' donations from the upper classes, who on occasion received nobility titles in return), bribery of the authorities in Cuba. Following failed reforms, in the course of the revolutions in Spain (1868–74) and Cuba (the anti-colonial Ten Years' War of 1868–78) the narrow epoch of emancipation began (1869–86),⁶⁸ which was associated with the attempt at a new restoration reform (1875–93).

A further anti-colonial revolution between 1895–98 (at the end of which the US went into Cuba in the so-called 'Spanish-American War' of 1898) ended Spain's colonial rule over Cuba.

The entire process is very complicated, so I shall restrict myself to some key points: in 1868 the '*república en armas*' ('republic in weapons' – the Cuban anti-colonialists used the methods of the *Cimarrones*, gathering in the bushes (*manigua*) or in the forested mountains (*montes*)), the itinerant counterstate of the anti-colonial separatists had taken over leadership in the process of abolition by proclaiming the freedom of all. The elite of the separatists, however, was

65 Cf. Corzo 1991; Corzo 2003, pp. 223–54; Corzo and Gonzalez 2004; on the resistance more generally cf. Lavina 1998, pp. 139–51; Lavina and Ruiz-Peinado 2006, *passim*.

66 Cf. Lopez Valdes 1985; Lopez Valdes 2004.

67 Cf. Montejo Arrechea 1993; Childs 2003, pp. 118–43.

68 Cf. Montaud 2000; Blackburn 2002, pp. 331–63.

made up of slaveholders. Nor did they want to do without personal services in the 'manigua' and, in parallel, passed a '*Reglamento de Libertos*' (Regulations for Libertos/ liberated slaves). The freedmen were formally called *Libertos*, but they were to carry on performing 'slave labour'.⁶⁹ In return, the Spanish Foreign Minister, Segismundo Moret, passed the 'Ley moret' (Moret act) of 4 July 1870, which was also known as the 'Ley de Vientres Libres' ('Free Body Law' or 'Free Womb Law'), because from the time of its proclamation, children carried by, and born of, slaves were formally free. The law was clarified in 1872 by the '*Reglamento para la ejecución en Cuba y Puerto Rico de la Ley Moret*' ('Regulations for the Implementation of the Ley Moret in Cuba and Puerto Rico'), which was passed in Madrid. Article 5 of the 1872 act also decreed: '*Todos los que por cualquier esclavos causa pertenezcan al Estado son declarados libres. Asimismo aquellos que bajo el título de emancipados estuvieren protección del Estado desde luego entrarán en el pleno ejercicio de los derechos de los ingenuos*'.⁷⁰ The colonial state thereby acknowledged that the *Emancipados* were state slaves and ordered their release.

With this, the Spanish-Cuban colonial state initially won back the initiative, especially because in Puerto Rico the 'Ley Moret' was considered to be the 'Ley Preparatoria', as a preparatory law for the final abolition of slavery which was repealed in 1873 – 13 years before it was repealed in Cuba.⁷¹ It was not until the first 'Ley Moret', on 25 December 1870, that Cespedes, the president of revolutionary Cuba, proclaimed the full abolition of slavery within the republican community. As was threatened in the Tightening Law on the Prohibition of the slave trade of 1866, on 24 March 1873 the Spanish republic also liberated all those female and male slaves who were not recorded in the census of 1867 (around 10,000 people who, after 1866, had still been captured and taken from Africa to Cuba).

At the end of the Ten Years' War (Guerra Grande, 1868–78), the 'freedom of slaves and Chinese *colonos* [coolies] in the ranks of the insurgents' was enshrined in the Pact of Zanjón (Article 3). The slaves who had fought on the Spanish side were also partially released. At least in this question, the

69 Cf. Pichardo (ed.) 1973, pp. 380–2.

70 Translation: 'All slaves who, for whatever reason, belong to the state, are declared free. Those who under the title of *Emancipados* enjoy the protection of the state are also entitled to the full rights of those who have been freed'. Ibid., pp. 383–6, here p. 384.

71 Cf. Ibid., pp. 383–6; Cabrero 1986, pp. 181–215; Dorsey 1994, pp. 165–207; Scott 1985, pp. 63–83; Schmidt-Nowara in Ortiz 1975, pp. 452–55; on the provisions for the implementation of the *Reglamento* of 1872, cf. Ibid., pp. 455–66 and Torres-Cuevas and Eusebio Reyes 1986, pp. 230–41.

separatists thereby maintained an active position and achieved partial success in the question of emancipation at a time when the sugar economy still heavily depended on slave labour.⁷²

The 'freedom of slaves' and the 10-year anti-colonial war represent a, if not the, core element of the discourse of independence in Cuba. Both whites, whose only security in old age came in the form of one or two slaves, as well as old free coloured people (who had previously owned slaves, like the Maceo family), could also go along with this.⁷³ After the end of the Guerra Grande in 1878, further conflicts through to 1880 and the compromise peace of Zanjón, the Spanish government proclaimed the 'Patronato' (8 May 1880).⁷⁴ The patronage was invested in common action of the state and the slaveholders for a period of 8 years. On 7 October 1886 the 'Real Orden suprimiendo el Patronato' ('The Royal Order for the Repeal of the Patronage') was submitted – shamefacedly buried in the financial budget for 1886 and around 18 months before the scheduled date.⁷⁵ With the abolition of the patronage, the remaining slaves (*patrocinados*) finally received the status of *Libertos*. Amongst their number in 1899 were around 13,000 born Africans from the last great slave imports between 1850 and 1873 who were still alive. Recent research shows that mass slavery was in existence the longest wherever the most potent *Hacendados* applied the most advanced technologies and forms of work organisation.⁷⁶

To summarise the complexity of the process: the narrower process of abolition, understood as the legal repeal and abolition of slavery, lasted for 17 years in Cuba, from 1869 to 1886, and was overlaid by an anti-colonial war in the form of a revolution of Cuban nationalists against Spain.

Of course, the period of post-emancipation and its core process, the integration of male and female slaves into Cuban society, lasted longer. For men, formal integration, the path from 'slaves to citizens', was nonetheless surprisingly short (in comparison with the other Ibero-American states) – it lasted just 15 years (1886–1901). For women it was 30 years longer (lasting until 1933).⁷⁷ The reason for the brevity of the process for men can be found in the anti-colonial revolutions of 1868–98, which is to say – many ex-slaves held weapons.

72 Cf. Pichardo (ed.) 1973, p. 403 f.

73 Cf. Ferrer 1999, pp. 112–38.

74 Cf. Pichardo (ed.), pp. 413–18.

75 Cf. Ibid., pp. 419–21; 'Real Orden suprimiendo el Patronato, Gaceta de la Habana, 29.10.1886', in Ibid., p. 420 f.

76 Cf. García and Naranjo (eds.) 2009, pp. 69–125; Fuente 2009, pp. 129–51.

77 Cf. Zeuske 2004, pp. 503–25.

However, there was also a state-founding dimension of everyday justice, in which the group of male and female slaves and their free descendants – regardless of whether they were *Libertos* during the time of slavery, or former slaves following its abolition in 1886 – were configured as a ‘fatherless’ group without the legitimacy of a closed church marriage.⁷⁸ Most former male and female slaves did not bear the ‘honourable’ name of the two *Apellidos* (surnames) of Castilian naming law,⁷⁹ but almost always only the first surname of one of their last masters, because female slaves were hardly ever formally married. In legal documents there was an abbreviation (s.o.a. or s.s.a.) which alluded to the absence of a second surname (*‘sin segundo apellido’* or *‘sin otro apellido’* – without other surname). Some of these lasted until the beginning of the 1960s.⁸⁰ This race labelling, albeit one without mentioning race, marks one aspect of the heritage of slavery.⁸¹ This heritage can also be located in economic structures (*latifundia*/ free small property),⁸² in the Cuban workers’ movement of the twentieth century (one of its main merits was the alliances it forged between blacks and whites!), in the biographies of former slaves and their descendants,⁸³ but also in Cuban culture, language, religiosity, the history of everyday life, food culture, music and in many other areas.

Conclusion

In Spanish and Portuguese America, in close relationship with West Africa and the Atlantic area, a large group of the early world working class (in total around five to six million people) emerged in agriculture, in mining and also in urban service and transport industries. Combined with high mobility and human trafficking on a massive scale, as well as transculturation and Creolisation, this process was particularly intense in Cuba between 1800 and 1900. All the elements of modern globalisation, to which contemporary male and female

78 Cf. Morrison 2007, pp. 55–80.

79 In Castilian naming law, a person whose parents are married always has two *apellidos*. The first surname is the first *apellido* of the father. The second surname is the first *apellido* of the mother; the child of an unmarried mother only has the first surname of the mother (historically speaking – today, both *apellidos* of the mother can be given).

80 Cf. Zeuske 2004, pp. 465–502; Zeuske 2007, pp. 18–37.

81 Cf. Zeuske 2006, pp. 99–116.

82 Scott and Zeuske 2002, pp. 669–99.

83 Cf. Barnet 1966; Barnet (ed.) 1999; Zeuske 1997, pp. 265–79; Zeuske 1998, pp. 65–84; Zeuske 1999, pp. 521–5; Zeuske 2002, pp. 235–66; Zeuske 2011, pp. 51–80.

workers are subjected, can be found in different historical forms both in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of America and on the Atlantic from the middle of the sixteenth century on (together – already since the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries – with the main forms of ‘modern’ food and drugs: coffee, cocoa, sugar, tobacco, rice, cassava, meat or fish and alcohol).⁸⁴ Yet this is particularly the case in West Cuba, which during the time, and during the sugar boom of the nineteenth century, was considered to be the ‘most modern colony’, with the boom continuing after the end of slavery in 1886 and lasting through to around 2000.⁸⁵

84 Cf. Zeuske 2016, pp. 315–48.

85 Cf. Zeuske 2012b. One author who, like me, sees continuities between older and contemporary forms of labour in the world (with the exception of direct bodily compulsion in the ‘West’ and the ‘North’) is Alessandro Stanziani (Stanziani 2013).

Potosí's Silver and the Global World of Trade (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)

Rossana Barragán Romano

Introduction

The painting of Potosí (see following page) produced in the Ottoman Empire depicts the red and dry Cerro Rico situated at 4060 metres above sea level (over 13,200 feet), in a green and even exuberant site with palaces, evoking and even explaining the production of silver. Its presence is certainly an expression of the importance of Potosí, which became one of the most populated cities in the world at that time,¹ and a result also of the interactions between the continents five centuries ago. Potosí is less present today, in comparison with the past, even in the history of the global world. This paradox has its *raison d'être*. In the most recent historiography, the main issue is the emergence of the West (Europe) as the main economic and political power, when there were also very similar conditions in Asia. The role of the Americas disappeared backstage. In this context, we can understand why today Potosí can be practically an unknown name, although it produced almost half of all the world's silver during its 'golden period', facilitating connections between the different continents.

Nevertheless, historiography did not emphasise these connections. Instead it specialised in different aspects, labour relations and production; the Andean regional trade or the evaluation of bullion and its impact in Europe. An interesting way to overcome this fragmented view could be commodity-chain analysis.

In a recent book on Latin America, Topik, Marichal and Frank write that 'the commodity chain ... defined as the production of tradable goods from their inception through their elaboration and transport to their final destination in the hands of consumers' is a 'basic instrument' that can 'complement the

1 It is very frequently said that the city reached 160,000 habitants at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Although this number is not very reliable, it was 145,000 in 1660 and 110,000 in 1680 (Tandeter, quoted by Mangan 2005, p. 165). The population of London in the mid-1670s was approximately 500,000 and Paris had around 400,000 by 1640.

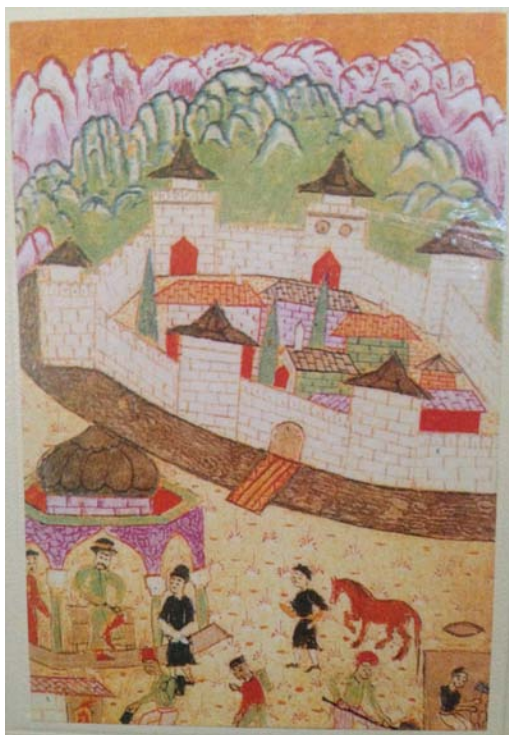


FIGURE 6.1
View of Potosí, late sixteenth century
 from *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbî Veya*
Hadis-i Nev. History of The West
Indies Known as The New Hadith
Turkey, Istanbul.

more traditional country or regional studies'.² The idea is thus to follow the commodity and to connect the various intermediate steps from production through to the final marketing. This also implies an attempt to understand and to make clearer the connections between producers and consumers or how silver, as a commodity, was used.

The fact that silver could immediately buy other goods makes it a commodity that is difficult to 'follow'. The silver can be transformed into several commodities very quickly, showing the limitations of chain-commodity analysis in tracking this metal and currency.

This article tries, nevertheless, to transcend the 'national' histories criticised by Van der Linden and to connect the spheres of production in Potosí, in the heart of South America, with the spheres of circulation there and beyond the seas, in Europe and in Asia. A first part tries to explain briefly how silver lost its pre-eminence and visibility, showing the switch from the framework analysis of dependency theories to the great divergence debates. A second part

2 Topik, Marichal and Frank (eds.) 2000, p. 14.

summarises the estimates of silver flows, their cycles and the role of Potosí. The third part reconstructs the different routes and trade of silver from America to Spain and Europe but also the routes to the Middle East or Asia through Africa. The case of the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, literally United East India Company or Dutch East India Company) is a very clear example of the role of silver in global trade, but also of the way silver was exchanged for silk, spices or other commodities. The fourth and final part recapitulates the labour relationships in Potosí, showing the coexistence and articulations between unfree, free and self-employed people as a result of colonial coercion but also of the agency of workers. The article concludes by pointing out another paradox: the fact that the amount of silver that stayed in the region allowed intra-regional connections but, at the same time, and without any re-inversion in the region, the vivid economic centre of Potosí declined together with its ores.

From Dependency Perspectives to the Great Divergence and from Latin America to Asia

Until a few decades ago, Potosí was a term that immediately brought to mind silver and wealth. The saying *vale un Potosí*, 'to be worth a Potosí', was an expression of this. Potosí was also the paradigmatic example of exploitation since its beginning, becoming particularly exemplary in Eduardo Galeano's best seller *Open Veins of Latin America*, which presents five centuries of the pillage of a continent, and was read by millions all over the world.³ Today, Potosí and Latin America seem to be less present in the historiographical work on global history, centred as it is much more in the Great Divergence. This is a paradox if we consider that silver formed the basis of global trade between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. How, then, can we understand the marginalisation of silver and Latin America today?

I think that part of the explanation lies in the questions raised in the debates. Interactions and connections are present in global history today and were also one of the main issues in the dependency perspectives developed in Latin America. Nevertheless, the shift from dependency perspectives to global trade and the Great Divergence is also a shift between Europe and America, to Europe and Asia respectively, and in this transformation, the interrogations changed. This is the process that I would like to highlight.

3 Eduardo Galeano was a journalist from the left whose book, published in 1971, has been translated into over 20 languages. Galeano 1997.

Dependency Theory, derived from Latin American structuralism and Marxist theories, is not, as we know, a homogenous strand of analysis. Nonetheless, its questions revolved around the causal relationships explaining economic growth or its absence; with the inequality between countries and within one country, and with the gaps between different regions and groups. The exports of primary resources, and the imports of manufactured goods that had a higher value, were seen as the basic unequal exchange. The lack of development in Latin America was attributed, then, to this pattern of exchange with Europe first, and with the US later on.

A central idea was the rejection of modernisation theory – as a unilinear and progressive transition from a pre-modern, underdeveloped society to a developed and modern society – and the dismissal of a dual society in Latin America with a traditional backward sector characterised as feudal, coexisting with a capitalist sector. Instead of considering two separated spheres, dependency theory saw them as linked. One was the cause of the other, the result of a relationship within an international context.

By dependence we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of inter-dependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining.⁴

It was the Argentinian economist Raul Prebisch who introduced the key terms of 'Centre' and 'Periphery' and the notion of unequal exchange between them.⁵ Also very early on, Celso Furtado⁶ explained that development and underdevelopment were linked. The latter could not be just a phase on the path to development. Cardozo and Faletto emphasised the international capitalist system but also the complex relations in the Centre-Periphery.⁷

André Gunder Frank is one of the best-known dependentists. He contends that capitalism produces underdevelopment in some areas and development in others. Frank stressed the drain of wealth from the satellites or the peripheries to the metropolis or the cores, thereby causing the 'development of

4 Cf. Chilcote 1974, p. 4.

5 Love 1990, p. 45.

6 Furtado 1959 and 1961.

7 Love 1990, pp. 158–9.

underdevelopment'.⁸ The backward regions appeared, then, to have been inserted into the world capitalist system centuries ago and they were the result of these relationships.

The explanations produced within the framework of dependency theories were scrutinised and evaluated across several decades. Two of its most important critiques argue that the thesis is not supported by sufficient empirical evidence and that trade and transnational corporations could also bring benefits.⁹

While dependency theory was still thinking in terms of countries, the world-systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein transcended nation-states. World-systems theory is conceived as an interdependent system consisting of a core, a periphery that is exploited by the core through unequal exchange, and a semi-periphery.¹⁰

The determinism of the world-system approach has been criticised, particularly its emphasis on the requirements of the capitalist core that affected the periphery regions. A clear example of this critique was conducted by Steve Stern, who wrote: 'historical explanation that reduces patterns of labor and economy in the periphery to a reaction of the capitalist world-system is one-dimensional and misleading, even for silver, the early world-system's most valued American treasure'. Stern proffered an alternative model, in which 'three great motors' together explain the development of peripheral labour relations: 'the world-system, popular strategies of resistance and survival within the periphery, and the mercantile and elite interests joined to an American "center of gravity"'.¹¹

In this context, Sempat-Assadourian's historical research led him to go beyond the concept of enclave that was used, showing, instead, vast regions of economic integration. He developed a sophisticated analysis proposing the concept of zones in a vast colonial economic space in Latin America.¹² In every zone, one or more products were the basis of a relationship with the metropolis but, at the same time, there was economic specialisation in different regions, although all of them had a relationship to the basic and main production. One of the zones received the name of the Peruvian Space (including the territories of Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Paraguay),¹³ with Potosí as the economic centre of the production of silver, and Lima as the political centre

8 Ibid., p. 165.

9 Reyes 2001.

10 Van der Linden 2001a, pp. 424–5.

11 Cf. Ibid., p. 451.

12 Sempat-Assadourian 1982, p. 14.

13 Ibid., p. 111.

and a connection point with the metropolis. This region had a high degree of economic self-sufficiency and, at the same time, a highly interconnected relationship between its different parts. The imports consisted of textiles of high quality (from Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands), iron from Spain (Vizcaya) and slaves to complement the labour force that was required. Everything else was produced in the region: textiles, wine, wheat, corn, fish, rice, meat, wood, cattle, salt, fuel, etc., but all of this production was related to the production of silver.¹⁴ The focus on the local and regional economies in Latin America has appeared, since then, as a vast field of research that allowed one to place emphasis, once again, on the dynamics of the peripheries that were neglected in dependence theories.

Soon after Sempat-Assadourian's contributions, the critique of the European and Eurocentric perspective for seeing the world through the lens of its position as a hegemonic power came to be contested. On the one hand, some authors, like Lila Abu-Lughod, went back in time in order to show that there was already an important and active economy in Southeast Asia and Asia.¹⁵ On the other hand, the role of China and Asia began to be placed in the foreground. Three authors were particularly important in this endeavour: Flynn and Giraldez, who in several works underlined that the silver from America ended up in China; Gunder Frank, who emphasised the role of Asia in the global economy in his book *ReOrient*; and finally Kenneth Pomeranz, who analysed the 'Great Divergence' between the Occident and the Orient in the nineteenth century, also stressing the analysis of connections.¹⁶

By 1995 at the latest, Flynn and Giraldez claimed that silver was the origin of world trade and that there had been 'silverization of China'.¹⁷ The authors disagreed with the conventional explanation that the flow of money from West to East was due to the European demand for Asian exports, with silver thus flowing to Asia to pay for the Europeans' continuous trade deficit.¹⁸ For these authors, this was a conventional trade-deficit explanation that had to end in order to consider, instead, the arbitrage trade or differences in prices that

14 Ibid., pp. 112–13; p. 145.

15 Abu-Lughod 1989.

16 Flynn and Giraldez 1995; Gunder Frank 2003 and 2010; Pomeranz 2000.

17 Giraldez 1999, p. 31; p. 10.

18 'There was no "trade imbalance" for which to compensate, so long as we recognise that silver itself was the key commodity distributed globally and that it was exchanged for items, mostly silk and porcelain but also gold, from the Asian mainland' (Flynn and Giraldez, 2010, p. 207). The reasoning of both authors implied a discussion between classical and neoclassical monetary theories (Flynn and Giraldez, 2010, pp. 103–6).

allowed important profits.¹⁹ For them, China was the 'world's most dynamic end-market for silver', not least because China changed its paper-money system to a silver-based economy.²⁰ The price of silver in China was higher than elsewhere in the world: in the early sixteenth century, 6 ounces of silver could purchase 1 ounce of gold in China while the same 6 ounces purchased half an ounce of gold in Europe.²¹ From the Chinese point of view, therefore, Europeans were middlemen, intermediaries who moved the silver between Japan and China and between America and China.²²

Both authors underlined the highly integrated global economy that had existed since the sixteenth century and the mistake of analysing the rise or decline of some regions in isolation, without taking into account the connections within the world.²³ They criticised the absence of a general definition of globalisation and its birthdate. For them, the date of 1820 proposed by O'Rourke and Williamson is late economic and narrow. Moreover it is dependent upon the international convergence of prices. For them, the birthdate is 1570, when America began to be reconnected to the Afro-Eurasian Old World and when all heavily populated continents began to exchange products continuously, directly and indirectly on a scale that generated a deep and lasting impact on all.²⁴ Finally, they considered that China was not an outpost of a Seville-centred world economy. They reversed the logic: Seville would be an outpost of a world economy that had not one centre but three: Beijing on the demand side and America and Japan on the supply side.²⁵ Flynn and Giraldez therefore stressed a unified global economy instead of 'World Systems'.²⁶ They thought that the division of the world into independent cores with their exclusive peripheries simply does not correspond to the evidence of global trade.²⁷

19 Flynn and Giraldez 2002, p. 395.

20 Giraldez 1999, pp. 10–11.

21 Flynn and Giraldez 2002, p. 393.

22 Giraldez 1999, pp. 10–11.

23 Flynn and Giraldez 2002, p. 392.

24 Flynn and Giraldez 2010, p. xi, p. 83 and p. 360. They were opposed to those who claimed that no global economy existed from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth centuries because silver prices converge several times during this time; because no world history would sustain the thesis that markets in the early-modern world should be characterised as perfectly competitive (*Ibid.*, p. 110).

25 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 419.

The later work of Gunder Frank, framed within a holistic analysis, emphasised the importance of taking into account Asia and Africa and vice versa in order to understand what happened in Europe or in the Americas.²⁸ The thesis of his book *ReOrient* is the existence of a single global world economy²⁹ in which before 1500 Europe was not more powerful than Asia either in economic, technological or productive terms. Moreover, this single economy did not 'incorporate' one region after another into the European world economy.³⁰ Contrary to Braudel and Wallerstein, Gunder Frank asserted that early modern history was already shaped by the world economy and not only by the expansion of the European world-system.³¹ In this context, Frank considered silver to be 'the wheels of this global market ... [which were] ... oiled by the world-wide flow of silver' or the circulatory system which connected, lubricated and expanded the world economy.³² The author asserted that Europeans were not able to sell anything else in competitive terms to Asia, becoming intermediaries in the re-export of silver in exchange for Asian goods and other products, while China demanded more and more silver.³³ In 1615, 94 percent of the Dutch East Company's exports were in bullion; between 1660 and 1720, silver accounted for around two-thirds of total exports of Europe and in general, the precious metals made up 87 percent of the Dutch company imports into Asia.³⁴

Pomeranz, in his well-known book written in 2000, assumed the importance of silver in allowing a 'truly global, large-scale trade'.³⁵ But his main interest was to explain the 'Great Divergence' or why the Industrial Revolution occurred in England (although after 1800) and not in China and the East, which had a burgeoning economy and a similar development to most parts of Europe. Overseas extraction and capital accumulation were not, nevertheless, at the heart of the explanation. Precious metals such as silver were no longer considered to be the cause of Europe's economic development. The contribution of non-European regions to finance growth in Europe was considered, although the author claimed that it 'would be ... equally risky to assume' that they were critical.³⁶ New World exports 'were crucial, but not a condition for

28 Frank 1998, p. 37.

29 Ibid., p. 52.

30 Ibid., pp. xxiv–xxv and p. 128.

31 Ibid., p. 327.

32 Ibid., p. 55 and p. 30.

33 Ibid., p. 74.

34 Ibid.

35 Pomeranz 2000, p. 190.

36 Ibid., p. 188.

continued and accelerated growth'.³⁷ The metals 'may have helped grease the wheels of European trade',³⁸ allowing Europe to expand its imports. Nonetheless, he argued, there are other reasons to explain its emergence as a privileged centre in the nineteenth century. For him, factors like markets, family systems or other institutions are not enough to explain the growth: he argues that America signified an ecological windfall for Europe. Without America, Europe could have been forced down a much more labour-intensive path of development.³⁹

The chronology and causes for the Great Divergence between the West and the East gave rise to an important historiography in which silver faded away almost in parallel to the idea that there were other reasons, beyond silver or the slave trade, which could explain the take-off of some of the countries in Europe, particularly that of Great Britain. The recent book by De Vries, an analysis of the origins of modern economic growth in which he synthesises other studies, asserts very clearly that the argument that 'The West became rich over the back of the rest is an indefensible thesis'.⁴⁰ For him it is most pertinent to evaluate the amount of metals that reached Europe. He established that the annual net balance per inhabitant was 3 grams of silver in 1700 and 4.5 in 1800. It was not possible, then, to see bullion as 'the major cause of the emergence ... of modern economic growth in north-western Europe'.⁴¹ The accumulation or the contribution of 'the periphery in terms of rents was not necessary for the West to take off, even in cases where it was substantial ... but it can never explain the enormous economical changes and the enormous increases in wealth in the Western economies'.⁴²

It is now clear that the rejection of the idea that the wealth of the West was due mainly to the exploitation of resources in other parts of the world led to an analysis that was, again, centred on Europe, albeit at least in comparison to other parts of the world. Latin America and the silver that fuelled the global trade was somehow minimised. It is time to return to this factor again.

37 Pomeranz 2000, p. 206.

38 Ibid., p. 270.

39 Pomeranz 2000, p. 274 and p. 283.

40 Ibid., p. 248.

41 Ibid., p. 252.

42 Ibid., p. 421.

Evaluation of the Silver Flows and Cycles

Although there are varying judgements concerning the amount of silver produced and shipped to Europe, there is an agreement about its importance. According to Barrett, between 1493 and 1800 71 percent of the world's gold and 85 percent of its silver came from the Americas.

The same author analysed different estimates between 1500 and 1800, showing that they range from 130,000 to 150,000 tons of silver and gold and from 97,182 to 109,666 tons of silver.⁴³ For this same period, TePaske estimated that the total value of gold and silver produced in the New World was 5.5 billion pesos (pesos of 272 maravedies), or 88 millions in kilograms (Figure 6.2).

Estimates of silver production vary according to the author. This variation is due to three main factors. First, incomplete or missing records in some mines; second, unregistered production; third, methodological problems related to the different kind of records, units and places of registration. In any case, New World mining contributed about 100,000 tons between the sixteenth and eighteenth century and production was more important during the eighteenth century (at around 50,000 tons). This same trend can be seen in other independent estimations,⁴⁴ showing that silver and gold increased their share of total world output from 68 to 89 and from 39 to 84 percent respectively.

There are four kinds of official records used to estimate silver production: 1) records of the royal tax on production (20 percent in Potosí and Peru and 10 percent in New Spain; 2) the records of the royal mints; 3) registers of silver shipments into Spain; 4) records of the official monopoly of the supply of mercury, necessary for the production of most silver.⁴⁵ While Hamilton, Chaunu and other authors used the registers of shipments, TePaske and Sluiter used the records of the royal tax on production.

In 1930, Earl Hamilton and his wife published a gigantic work on the shipments from America to Spain from 1501 to 1650, based on the Archive of the Indies in Seville. They documented the metals carried on the galleons (*galeones*) from Peru via Tierra Firme (Panamá) and the fleets from New Spain (Mexico). The author clearly stated that he analysed the 'imports of gold and silver and not the total production of these metals in the Indies'.⁴⁶ This is why TePaske underlined how Hamilton's numbers were the official remittances from

43 Barrett 1990, p. 236 and pp. 228–9.

44 This estimate is based on the collection of bullion production assembled in the 1920s by the US Bureau of Mines (Cross 1983, p. 402).

45 Barrett 1990, p. 239.

46 Hamilton 1975, p. 23.

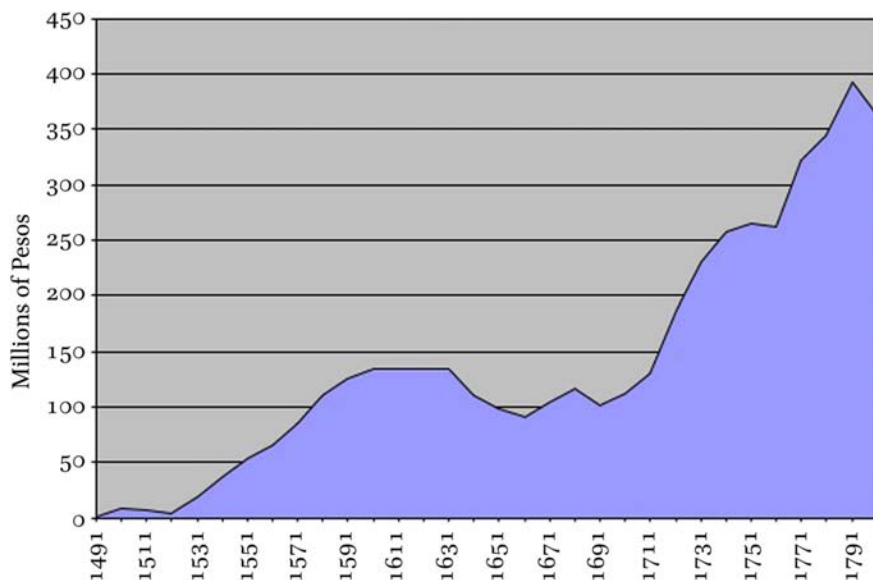


FIGURE 6.2 *Total gold and silver output, 1491–1791*⁴⁷

the American mines and did not necessarily account for the bullion extracted.⁴⁸ Twenty years later, Pierre Chaunu and Huguette Chaunu⁴⁹ documented the ships going from Spain to the Indies between 1581 and 1660 and their findings did not correlate with Hamilton's. In the late 70s and the 80s, García Fuentes provided data from 1650 to 1700 and García-Baquero⁵⁰ offered data from 1717 to 1778. For the last period, after 1778, there are John R. Fisher's accounts.⁵¹

Morineau criticised Chaunu's work and his basic assumptions that there was a uniform distribution of silver in the shipments and that there was 'an adéquation entre les tonnages des jauge et les volumes ou les valeurs des cargaisons', putting Chaunu's work seriously in doubt. Morineau claimed that only some of the shipments received silver.⁵² Morineau is also the only one who used other sources in order to estimate the volume of the bullion and, more precisely, the

47 Garner, Decennial TPGsex-2.xls. Kilograms, Table 1. Inside my desk. www.insidemydesk.com.

48 Te Paske, 2010, pp. 306 and p. 5.

49 Chaunu and Chaunu 1955–60.

50 García-Baquero 1976 and 1996.

51 Fisher 1992 and 2003.

52 Morineau n.d, p. 281.

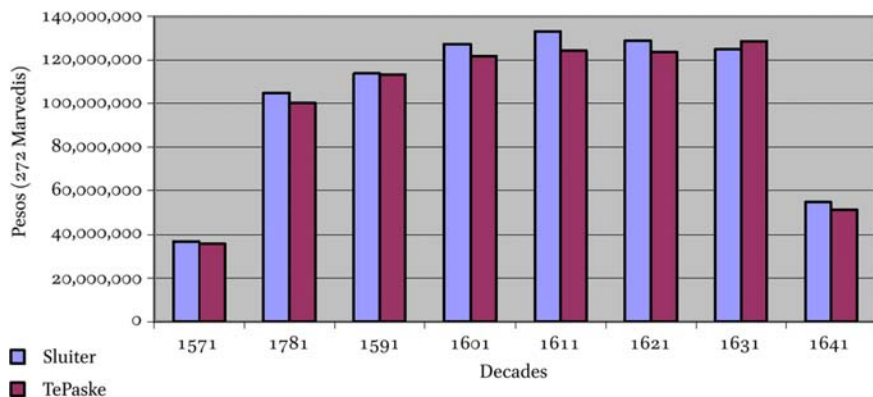


FIGURE 6.3 *Comparison of silver registrations between the data of TePaske and Sluiter, 1571–1645*⁵³

arrivals of silver from the Americas: the commercial Dutch gazettes, showing that the amounts were greater than those from the Spanish records. Morineau has shown that more silver was arriving in Europe and in places other than Seville.⁵⁴ Te Paske considered, nevertheless, that the estimates provided by the gazettes may also be inaccurate. For him, the silver that could be smuggled could not amount to more than 25 percent.⁵⁵

In recent years, there are two main sources of silver-production analysis. Both are based on the records of the royal tax on production. The first was assembled and produced by John TePaske and Herbert Klein and the second one by Engel Sluiter.⁵⁶ Both are used by Garner and based almost on the same sources. While the decennial totals are very close, they are not identical (Figure 6.3).

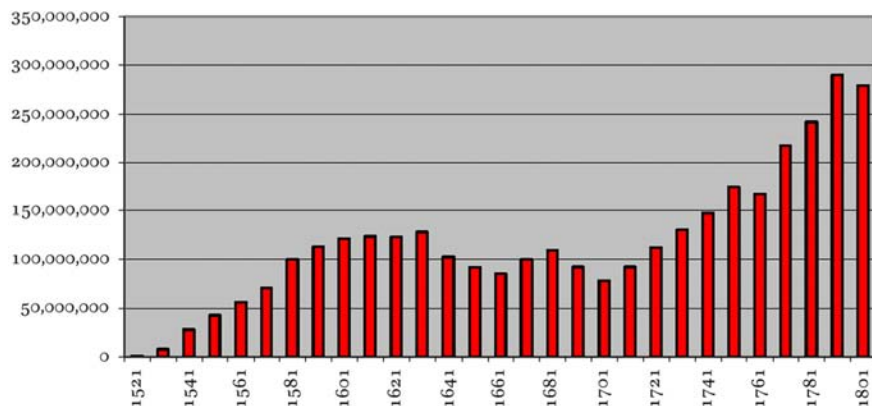
TePaske established the trends in New World Silver Output (Figure 6.4) over three centuries. According to him, there was an impressive rise between 1530 and 1630 (from 7,550,000 pesos to 128,600 pesos). The data shows a decrease and a drop in the seventeenth century due to a number of factors – mainly the exhaustion of the mines, the provision of mercury and the retention of crown revenues in the Indies. After 1721, the rise was important again, and this tendency lasted until the end of the eighteenth century. This important

⁵³ Garner 2006, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Barrett 1990, p. 235. John Munro criticised Morineau's data. See: http://eh.net/book_reviews/american-treasure-and-the-price-revolution-in-spain-1501-1650/.

⁵⁵ Te Paske 2010, p. 312.

⁵⁶ Garner 2006, p. 5.

FIGURE 6.4 *Decennial silver output, 1521–1801*⁵⁷TABLE 6.1 *Ownership of remittances of gold and silver in pesos fuertes (of 8 reales), 1717–96*⁵⁸

| | Royal Treasury | | Private remittances | | TOTAL |
|---------|----------------|------|---------------------|------|---------------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | |
| 1717–39 | 25,347,396 | 12.8 | 173,369,002 | 87.2 | 198,716,398 |
| 1740–57 | 25,516,794 | 12.0 | 186,820,697 | 88.0 | 212,337,491 |
| 1758–78 | 26,891,471 | 8.0 | 308,546,138 | 92.0 | 335,437,609 |
| 1779–96 | 81,143,921 | 22.0 | 287,473,628 | 78 | 368,617,549 |
| Total | 158,899,582 | 14.2 | 956,209,465 | 85.8 | 1,115,109,047 |

increase is attributed to the use of explosives to open up new lodes and to drain mine tunnels; the availability of mercury from Almadén, Idria and Huancavelica; new silver discoveries; native population recovery; and, in the case of Peru, a fall in taxes.⁵⁹

García Baquero González analysed the remittances of gold and silver in the eighteenth century (Table 6.1). The author distinguished between the remittances from the Royal Treasury (mainly taxes: the royal fifth but also others like tributes, fines and so on) and the private remittances sent by merchants and

⁵⁷ Garner 2007, p. 28.

⁵⁸ García-Baquero 2003, p. III.

⁵⁹ Te Paske 2010, pp. 75–7.

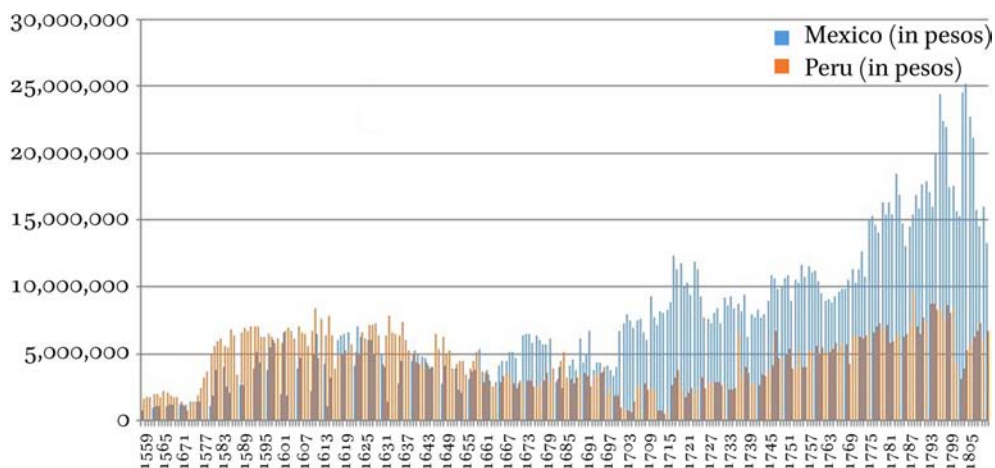


FIGURE 6.5 *Silver output by Viceroyalty, 1559–1804*⁶⁰

by people living in the Americas. The private remittances accounted for 85.8 percent and the public remittances for 14.2 percent.⁶¹

In the period between 1747 and 1796, bullion accounted for 71.9 percent and other products for 28.1 percent; between 1747 and 1778 bullion represented 76.4 percent and colonial products 23.6 percent; and between 1779 and 1796 the figures were 66 percent and 34 percent respectively.⁶²

Gold and silver accounted for 56 percent (42.5 percent in private remittances and 13.9 percent in remittances of the crown) while other products represented 36 percent (tobacco 13.6 percent, cacao 7.8 percent, sugar 5.5 percent, indigo 5.2 percent, cochineal 4.2 percent).⁶³

Two regions dominated silver production: Mexico and Potosí (in Peru and Río de La Plata) produced more than 99 percent of the New World's total silver output. Although the mines of Mexico produced the most silver over the entire colonial period (Figure 6.5), Potosí produced much more during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁴

The remittances by geographic origin show the importance of New Spain in the eighteenth century. In second place was the Plata River/Peru.⁶⁵

60 Source: Garner, SpAmSilverOutputex.xls. Colonial Table 1. Inside my desk www.insidemysdesk.com.

61 García-Baquero 2003, pp. 110–11.

62 Ibid., p. 120.

63 The remaining 14 percent of the commodities consisted of other products.

64 Te Paske 2010, p. 141.

65 García-Baquero 2003, p. 114.

TABLE 6.2 *Exports from Buenos Aires to Spain, 1715–78*⁶⁶

| Products | Private remittances or particular accounts | % | Royal Treasury | % | TOTAL | % |
|----------------|---|--------|-------------------|-------|------------|--------|
| Silver | 41,338,206 | 76.07 | 3,082,360 | 83.11 | 44,420,567 | 76.52 |
| Gold | 6,087,818 | 11.20 | 5,988 | 0.16 | 6,093,806 | 10.50 |
| Total Metals | 47,426,025 | 87.27 | 3,088,348 | 83.28 | 50,514,373 | 87.02 |
| Other Products | 6,915,779 | 12.73 | 620,242 | 16.72 | 7,536,021 | 12.98 |
| TOTAL | 54,341,804 | 100.00 | 3,708,590 | 99.99 | 58,050,395 | 100.00 |
| | 93.61 % | | | | 6.39 % | |

In 2000 Fernando Jumar also reconstructed the return cargo from the Río de La Plata to Spain. His information is from 256 ships between 1715 and 1778 (248 with detailed information). While García-Baquero provided a total of 45,882,020 for Río de La Plata, Jumar presented a total of 58,050,395.⁶⁷

This data confirms that the Royal Treasury played a small part while the Private Remittances shares amounted to 93 percent. Silver accounted for 76 percent, while diverse products made up 13 percent and gold 10 percent (Table 6.2). Between other products, leather and vicuña wool were the most important.

As can be seen in Figure 6.6, Potosí was the main silver-production region in Peru and the Plata Region.⁶⁸

The introduction of amalgamation in the 1570s, the constant supply of mercury from Huancavelica and the introduction of the *mita* in Potosí explains this impressive rise in the last decades of the sixteenth century and Potosí's pivotal role in production until 1640 (Figures 6.6 and 6.9), when Potosí's share of Peruvian production oscillated between 84 and 98 percent. From 1621 through

66 Jumar 2000, p. 248. Table 13. I added percentages to this table.

67 See Jumar 2000, p. 248 and p. 670. The totals obtained by Jumar are different from the totals obtained for the same period by García-Baquero, Morineau and other authors. In any case, in his thesis Jumar presented a careful analysis of the possible reasons for these divergences: the application of different money units and the evaluation of non-minted metals.

68 Garner 2007, p. 28.

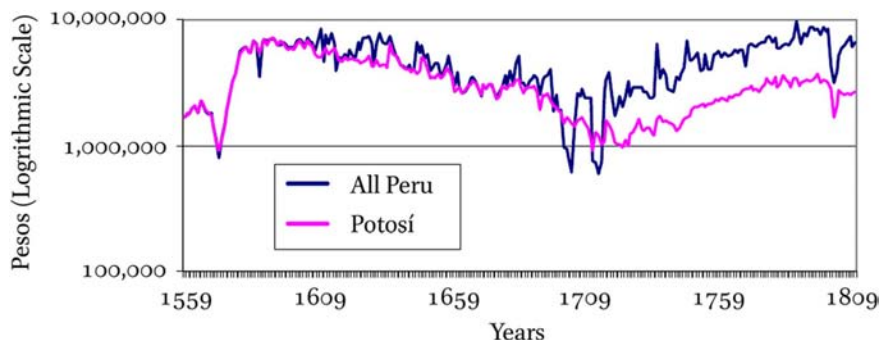


FIGURE 6.6 *Potosí and all colonial production*⁶⁹

to 1690, it was in the 60 percent range and it fell to the 40 percent range between 1711 and 1790.⁷⁰ Output rose again in the eighteenth century due in part to the 1736 reduction of the tax on silver from a fifth to a tenth, as well as the additional mercury supplied from Almaden. Output was 57,570,000 pesos in 1760 and 86,960,000 pesos in 1790.⁷¹

The general trends in silver output in America explain why Flynn and Giraldez established two main cycles in the global trade of silver: the Potosí-Japan cycle from 1540 to 1640 and the Mexican cycle in the eighteenth century.⁷² The Potosí-Japan cycle boosted an intense circulation and trade: silver was purchased in places such as Amsterdam and sold at higher prices in China. Nevertheless, for Flynn and Giraldez, the accumulation of American and Japanese silver meant a yearly drop in the price of silver. Adam Smith had already noted that 'the metal sunk lower in proportion to that of corn'.⁷³ The depletion of ores and the fall of the price of silver to its production cost implied that silver profits were no longer interesting.⁷⁴ This was an important crisis that lasted until the eighteenth century.

There is a debate about the causes that allowed the second cycle: some attribute the expansion to the 'supply side' and others to the 'demand-side'. More probably, both factors jointly explain this phenomenon. On the one hand, the Spanish Crown had a policy of invigorating the production of silver.

69 Ibid., p. 39.

70 Te Paske 2010, p. 152; see also Garner 2006, p. 11.

71 Te Paske 2010, p. 146.

72 Giraldez 2002, p. 392.

73 Cf. Flynn and Giraldez 2002, p. 402.

74 Flynn and Giraldez state that silver lost two-thirds of its purchasing power in this period (Ibid., p. 414).

On the other hand, it is claimed that China had a demographic revolution with the introduction of new crops like potatoes. The production of silver in the eighteenth century was more than double that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries combined: Peru, including Potosí, produced three times as much as their output in the seventeenth century and Mexico's production was twice that of Peru.⁷⁵

Silver Routes

Where did the silver go after it was turned over to agents in these Spanish entrepôts? Precise measurement of this flow is difficult to document since the silver was shipped – literally – to the ends of the earth. The bullion flowed out of Spain to England, France, and the Low countries for purchase of manufactured goods unavailable in Castile. From English, French, Flemish or Dutch ports, Spanish pesos were transshipped through the Baltic or Murmansk into Scandinavia or Russia and traded for furs. In Russia [silver] went southeastward along the Volga into the Caspian Sea to Persia, where it was sent overland or by sea to Asia. Spanish-American bullion also flowed out of Spain through the Mediterranean and eastward by land and water routes to the Levant. India procured its American silver by means of traffic from Suez through the Red Sea and into the Indian Ocean, overland from the eastern end of the Mediterranean through Turkey and Persia to the Black Sea, and finally into the Indian Ocean, or directly from Europe on ships rounding the Cape of Good Hope following the route discovered by Vasco da Gama. The latter way was also used by Portuguese, Dutch, and English ships to carry Spanish American treasure directly to Asian ports to exchange for Asian goods. Lastly – and long ignored – American silver found its way to the Orient by way of the Pacific route from Acapulco to Manila.⁷⁶

Silver was certainly flowing everywhere. From America, silver went to Europe and from Europe to the Baltic, the Levant, and then – through the Cape – to South-East Asia.⁷⁷ The major routes can be seen in the following maps:

75 Ibid., p. 407.

76 Te Paske 1983, p. 433.

77 De Vries 2003.

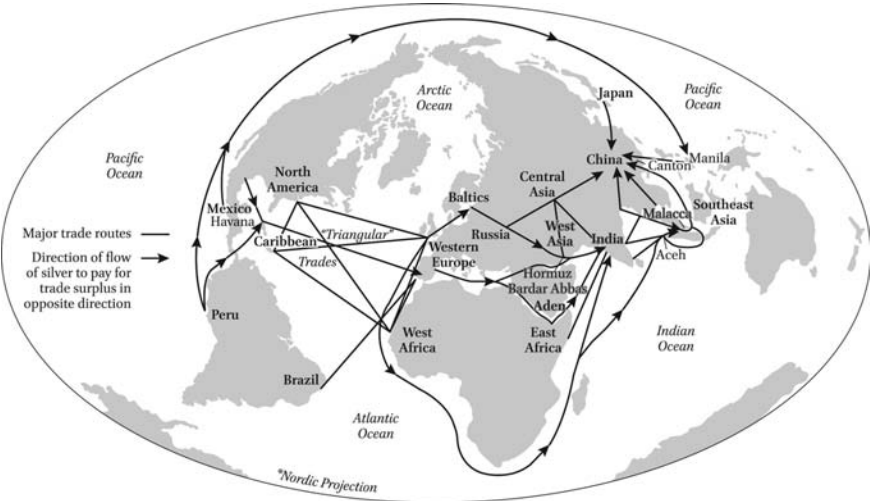


FIGURE 6.7 World silver production and exports between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (a)⁷⁸

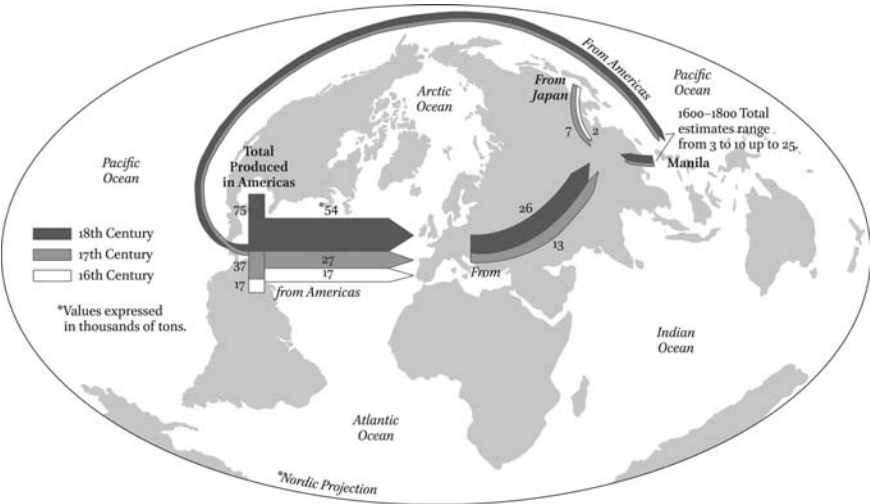
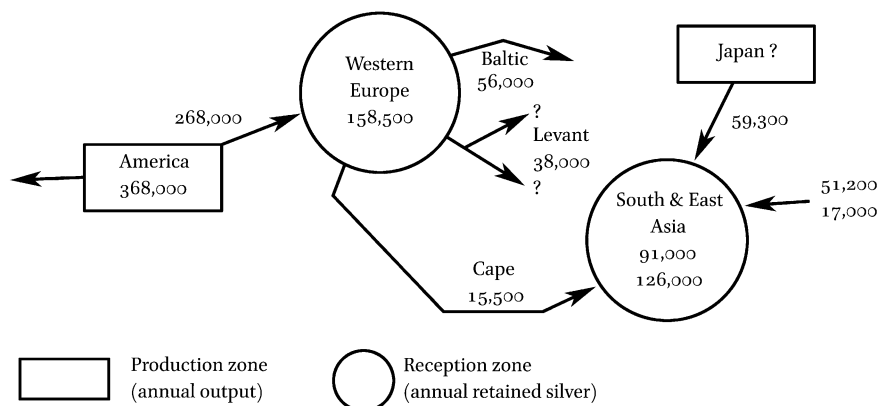
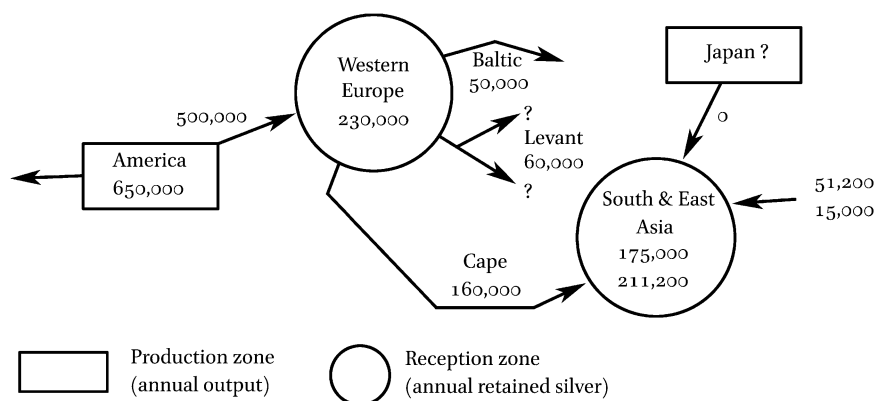


FIGURE 6.8 World silver production and exports between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (b)⁷⁹

Frank synthesised in these maps some of Barrett and Attman's estimates with the amount of silver in tons: 17,000 in the sixteenth century, 37,000 in the seventeenth century and 75,000 tons in the eighteenth century. About half of these

78 Frank 1998, Map. 2.1.

79 Frank 1998, Map 3.1.

FIGURE 6.9 *Flows of silver (in Kg.), 1600-50*⁸⁰FIGURE 6.10 *Flows of silver (in Kg.), 1725-50*⁸¹

were remitted to Asia: 13,000 in the seventeenth and 26,000 in the eighteenth century (Figure 6.8). The flows of silver during the seventeenth and eighteenth century were also briefly summarised by de Vries (Figures 6.9 and 6.10).

The circulation was in any case very complex. There were four main routes: from the centres of production to the main ports in Spanish America and to Spain; from Europe to the Far East through the Baltic and the Levant to Central Asia, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean; from Europe to Asia and from Acapulco to Manila; and with a broader perspective, from the Pacific to the Philippines and China.

80 De Vries 2003, p. 80.

81 De Vries 2003, p. 81.

From Potosí to the Ports in Spanish America and to Europe

In general, the main routes used by the Spaniards in the Viceroyalty of Peru were part of the Inca road system, which was 39,900 kilometres or 24,800 miles long.

The road from Potosí to the Pacific Ocean was around 1,670 kilometres in length; it led towards the north, to Lima, the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, or to Arica and then to Lima by ship. The first went to Oruro, Lake Titicaca, Puno, Cuzco and Lima. The second, to Oruro and then to the west, toward Arica. This was shorter and was known as the 'silver road'. In Arica the ships used to go to the Callao, the port of Lima. This same route was used for the mercury going from Huancavelica to Chincha and Arica, and then to Potosí.

The other important road, 2,980 kilometres in length, was to the Atlantic Ocean, to Buenos Aires. The road went through the pampas to Tupiza, Jujuy, Tucumán, Córdoba and Buenos Aires. This road was frequently called the 'back door' of the Viceroyalty, an illegal conduit for the import of European goods. Contraband was important through the port of Buenos Aires because the route was shorter than through Panama. Cross states that during the most successful years around one to two million pesos flowed illegally from the mines through Buenos Aires, equal to around 15 to 30 percent of Potosí's total silver output. In 1625 trade began to decline due to the establishment of a customs house between Buenos Aires and Potosí. Nonetheless, the flow of contraband never ceased and was facilitated by the establishment of Sacramento, located near the Rio Plata.⁸²

The road to the Pacific was the main channel of communication with Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this period the commercial transatlantic system had three centres: Lima, Mexico and Seville. Each centre had its own port: Callao in Perú (Lima, with the route leading to Panamá and Portobelo), Veracruz in Mexico and Seville-Cádiz in Spain.⁸³

The navigation of Lima-Panamá was free until Francis Drake's attack in 1581, when the Spanish Crown started the system of convoys known as Armada del Mar del Sur (Army of the Southern Sea).⁸⁴ The merchants used to go from Lima to Nombre de Dios in Panamá (until 1597) and then to Portobelo. The famous *ferias* (fairs or exchanges markets) of Portobelo began to decline in

82 Cross 1983, pp. 413–15.

83 Fisher 1992, p. 98.

84 Suárez 2009, p. 239; Fisher 1992, p. 71.



FIGURE 6.11 Collao's Port in Lima, Perú.
Ciudad La Villa De Callau.⁸⁵

the eighteenth century when there were only four fairs between 1700 and 1740 (1708, 1726, 1730 and 1739, the year in which it was destroyed by the British).⁸⁶

The conflict between Britain and Spain (the War of Jenkins' Ear or Guerra del Asiento) signified the end of the system of fleets and the introduction of different ships (*barcos* and *navíos de registro*) that used to go from Chilean and Peruvian ports⁸⁷ in the Pacific, or Buenos Aires in the Atlantic, to the Caribbean region.

Free trade was introduced in 1756 and in 1778 several ports in America and Spain were allowed to be part of the commercial routes of trade, which put an end to the restriction between Seville and the main colonial ports in America (Veracruz, Cartagena, Lima/Callao and Panama).

85 Guamán Poma de Ayala 1980, p. 382.

86 Mazzeo 2010, p. 236.

87 Fisher 1992, p. 158.

From Europe to the Baltic Area

The Baltic area (East Prussia, Poland and Russia) produced grain (wheat), hemp, flax, bar iron, leather, skins and furs. It is assumed that this trade was made up by exporting silver coins.⁸⁸ Attman calls attention to the fact that the Baltic route carried at least 50 tons per year.⁸⁹

Controlling long-distance and intercontinental trade was also key to the Ottoman rulers, who recognised its positive economic dynamics. Quoting Inalcik, Flynn and Giraldez stated that silver and silver coins were the most important items of trade with the West. To encourage its free import, the Ottomans removed all customs duties on silver and from 1580s silver flooded the Levantine Market.⁹⁰

Persian silk was exported to Europe under the control of the Ottomans. Persian silk exports passed through Turkey, where Armenians were the main intermediaries in this trade: Izmir played a key role as entrepôt in the global circulation of silver.⁹¹ It was even more important than Istanbul.

From Acapulco to Manila

Crown revenues were going to Manila to support the Spanish establishments in the islands, but also to purchase – both by legal and illegal means – oriental goods to be resold in the Indies. Remissions during this 220-year period are estimated to amount to no more than 17 percent of all crown revenues remitted outside the Indies from Mexico, while the other 83 percent went to Castile. This amounted to 200,000 pesos (5,100 kg) annually.⁹² There was also a (difficult to estimate) drain of bullion in the private sector that started to be regulated. Commerce could be carried on only by two galleons of 300 tons each and they were not allowed to carry more than 250,000 pesos of oriental goods from the Philippines to Acapulco and no more than 500,000 pesos (12,800 kg) of silver to Manila. These limitations applied until 1702, when the restrictions were raised first to 300,000 pesos and then to 600,000 pesos and 1,000,000 pesos.⁹³

88 Barrett 1990, p. 250.

89 Flynn and Giraldez 2010, p. 214.

90 Ibid., p. 16.

91 Ibid., p. 17 and p. 27.

92 Te Paske 1983, p. 434.

93 Tepaske 1983, p. 436.

According to Barrett, who based himself on Te Paske,⁹⁴ annual average shipments did not exceed 17 tons, which was much less than a million pesos annually (it is calculated that one million pesos was the equivalent of 25.6 tonnes before 1728). Flynn and Giraldez also quote TePaske, giving much higher numbers. Te Paske states, in the same work, that the silver flowing from Manila exceeded the limitations imposed on its transportation (500,000 pesos), and it was estimated that 128 tons or five million pesos left annually. 307 tons or 12 million pesos were smuggled out in 1597. Portugal's average exports to Asia and the Dutch and English East India Companies combined were 50 tons of silver.⁹⁵

Barrett also noted the discrepancy between production in Spanish America and the shipments to Europe, concluding that production exceeded exports over the Atlantic by 40,000 tons. This would mean that 5.5 million (135 tons) per year remained in America or went to the Philippines. In comparison, the Portuguese sent 8.47 tons of silver per year, while the Dutch East India Company handled 24.93 tons of silver and the English East India Company sent an average of 17.57 tons per year between 1660 and 1700. The silver passing through the whole of Europe into Asia was estimated to be at least three times that of the estimates for Manila.⁹⁶ The magnitude of the trade between America and Asia is now being stressed. Bonialian claims that there was a Hispanoamerican Pacific.⁹⁷

From Europe to Asia via the VOC

At the end of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of the main powers in the trade in Asia was the VOC or the Dutch East India Company. Although the history of the VOC has produced a wealth of literature, the role that silver played in this has not produced a specialised and detailed study. The importance of silver is nevertheless recognised. Gaastra wrote that trade in Asia was conducted to a great extent with precious metals from Europe and that the VOC was responsible for a considerable part of exports to Asia (Figure 6.12).⁹⁸ This is why every ship had currency mainly in silver, and additionally in gold and copper coins. The real-of-eight (*real de a ocho*), also known as the Spanish dollar, was the basic and famous silver coin. Coming from America and Spain, it

94 Barrett, 1990, p. 248.

95 Cited by Flynn and Giraldez 2010, pp. 204–5.

96 Ibid., p. 17.

97 His research is very rich and opens a vast field of inquiry. See Bonialian 2012, 2014.

98 Gaastra 1983, p. 447.

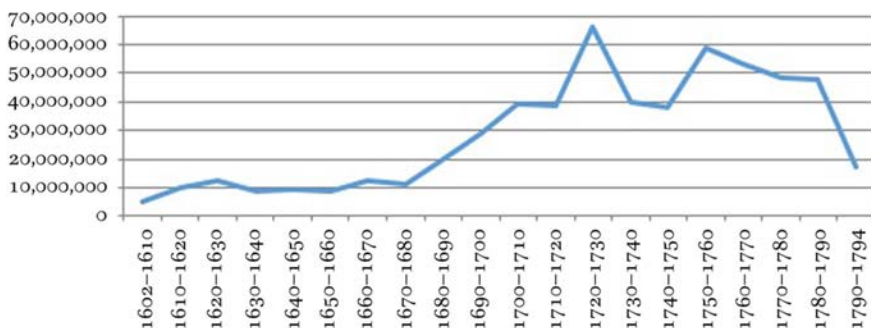


FIGURE 6.12 *The export of currency by the VOC between 1602 and 1794 (in guilders, fl.)*⁹⁹

remained until the end of the eighteenth century (although not all currency came from America).¹⁰⁰

The Cape route was key to this trade and, according to Jan de Vries,¹⁰¹ played a modest role in the seventeenth century, becoming much more important in the first decades of the eighteenth. Vries stated that European trading companies supplied between seven and twelve percent of the specie entering continental Asia, just as they were responsible for removing only six percent of the silver entering Europe from the New World. In the eighteenth century it was different. 35 percent of silver flowed through this route and it formed, at the same time, three-quarters of 'all specie reaching' South and East Asia. He also claimed that the Cape route was an exchange of silver exports for commodity imports, about 150 tons of silver every year.¹⁰²

Pepper and spices were important and they represented about a quarter of VOC revenues between the 1640s and 1780. Saltpeter, drugs and Chinese porcelain were the other commodities present in the return cargoes. But textiles, particularly Indian cotton piece goods, were most important after 1660 and later on two new commodities emerged: coffee from Yemen and tea from China.¹⁰³

The lion's share of the precious metal was delivered to Batavia and from there it was distributed to other offices. In general, silver went to Ceylon and Bengal, and gold to Coromandel. The Bengal trade was one of the most important for the VOC, accounting for 36 percent of total returns to the Netherlands at the end of the seventeenth century. Commodities from Bengal were bought

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁰⁰ Bruijn, Gaastra and Schoffer 1987, p. 179 and p. 184.

¹⁰¹ Vries 2003.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 65.

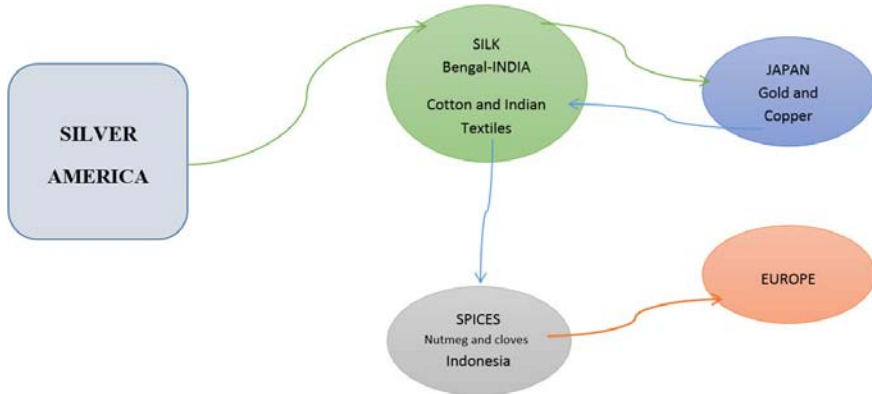


FIGURE 6.13 *Silver as the primer commodity for VOC trade within Asia*¹⁰⁴

with silver. This was also the case in Surat. But not all the money from the Netherlands arrived to Asia via Batavia. Some ships were also sent directly to Surat, Ceylon, Coromandel, Bengal and – in the eighteenth century – to Canton.¹⁰⁵

Jacobs, who studied the importance of trade between Asia and the Dutch Republic, stated that the Dutch did not have enough goods to trade with Asia and that the company ‘was forced to finance the trade with precious metals’ that were brought by the East India men from Europe. The Company then developed commercial activities in Asian waters,¹⁰⁶ using the silver to buy raw silk in India in order to sell it to the Japanese market. In Japan they obtained gold and copper – exported and exchanged in India for textiles. In the Indonesian Archipelago, the Company acquired spices for the European market (Figure 6.13).

It is also important to take a closer look at this trade. The exports from Batavia, the crossroad of the vast network and seat of the VOC governing body in Asia,¹⁰⁷ amounted to more than 50 percent, followed by Bengal (10.55 percent), Coromandel (7.26 percent) and Surat (4.15 percent). Imports from the Dutch Republic were also important in these same locations (Batavia 50.58 percent; Bengal 10.55 percent; Coromandel 7.26 percent). The proportion of silver imported was nevertheless higher in Bengal (41.90 percent) and Bantam (11.34 percent).

¹⁰⁴ Author's graphic based on Jacobs 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Gastra 1983, p. 455.

¹⁰⁶ Jacobs 2006, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Jacobs 2006, p. 3.

TABLE 6.3 *Total VOC trade between Asia and the Dutch Republic in Dutch guilders (Ceylon, Bengal, Coromandel, Canton, Batavia, Good Hope) in Guilders, 1713–90*¹⁰⁸

| | Total exports from Asia to the Dutch Republic | Imports in silver into Asia from the Dutch Republic | % | Total imports into Asia from the Dutch Republic |
|-------|---|---|-------|---|
| 1713 | 4,300,500 | 2,447,700 | 52.35 | 4,675,600 |
| 1732 | 4,686,100 | 4,018,000 | 67.17 | 5,981,500 |
| 1753 | 8,986,600 | 5,528,100 | 73.06 | 7,566,300 |
| 1773 | 6,961,400 | 3,606,900 | 58.50 | 6,165,200 |
| 1790 | 6,199,800 | 4,798,200 | 63.16 | 7,596,900 |
| Total | 31,134,400 | 20,398,900 | 63.78 | 31,985,500 |

TABLE 6.4 *VOC Trade within Asia, 1713–90*¹⁰⁹

| | 1713 | 1732 | 1753 | 1773 | 1790 | TOTAL | % |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| Silver and other coins | 7,200,000 | 7,563,300 | 12,922,800 | 5,376,400 | 3,798,600 | 36,861,100 | 26.66 |
| Other goods | 25,913,900 | 19,473,300 | 25,763,600 | 15,646,300 | 14,601,400 | 101,398,500 | 73.34 |
| TOTAL | 33,113,900 | 27,036,600 | 38,686,400 | 21,022,700 | 18,400,000 | 138,259,600 | |

The inter-Asian trade system thus helped to finance Europe's Asian imports. Although silver did not receive any special attention in Jacobs's book, thanks to tables in the Appendix it is possible to highlight its role in the VOC. In the direct trade between Asia and the Dutch Republic, silver represented between 50 to 63 percent of imports between 1713 and 1790 (Table 6.3).

Silver was also present, albeit in smaller proportions, in the VOC's trade within Asia, representing around 26 percent of all the goods that were exported from the Dutch Republic (Table 6.4).

It is important to mention that, for Jacobs, one of the main reasons behind the decline of the VOC's trade precisely revolved around silver. She claims that Japanese policy implied that after 1668 the Dutch were no longer allowed to

¹⁰⁸ Table put together based on Ibid., pp. 354–5.

¹⁰⁹ Table compiled on the basis of Ibid., p. 373.

export silver, that they could not sell raw silk to them and that they lost almost all their sources of gold and silver in Asia in the eighteenth century because Indian textiles could no longer be the barter product par excellence in Asia, because they were in great demand in Europe.¹¹⁰

In any case, the trade of the VOC is a perfect example of the complexity of trade in which silver was always involved. This example shows the difficulties in following its path, as in classical chain-commodity analysis for other commodities.

An Inca System at the Base of Global Silver Production

The Potosí mines were 'discovered' in 1545 and very quickly began to be exploited, producing more than one million pesos year (Figure 6.6). The graphic clearly shows an incredible increase in production after 1575. A decrease began to slowly set in during the seventeenth century, while from 1640 in particular it began to fall. At the end of the seventeenth century, the decline ceased and the low production remained until 1740, when there was a renaissance. But production never rose to the levels seen at the end of the sixteenth century. Although this second period appears small in comparison with the first, it was nevertheless important. Garner writes that 'Without Potosí's 18th century revival, both the mining economy and the general economy might have remained stalled down to the end of the colonial period, or at the very least, until the reorganization of the viceroyalty in 1778'.¹¹¹

The *mita* or draft system of work instituted in 1573–5 remained throughout this long period of almost three centuries, coexisting, nevertheless, with other forms of labour relationships. Behind the continuity of the *mita*, there were also important changes that seem to be the result, mainly, of the actions and agency of the workers.¹¹²

During the earlier period, the extraction process, smelting and casting in wind-blown furnaces (traditional pre-hispanic technology called *huayras*) and sale in local markets was controlled by the indigenous population.¹¹³ They carried out the extraction using their own production means, exploiting part of the mines at their own cost.¹¹⁴ They did so in great part for their own benefit.

110 Ibid., p. 286.

111 Garner 1988, pp. 910–11.

112 Barragán 2015.

113 Sempat-Assadourian 1982, p. 22.

114 Ibid., p. 295.

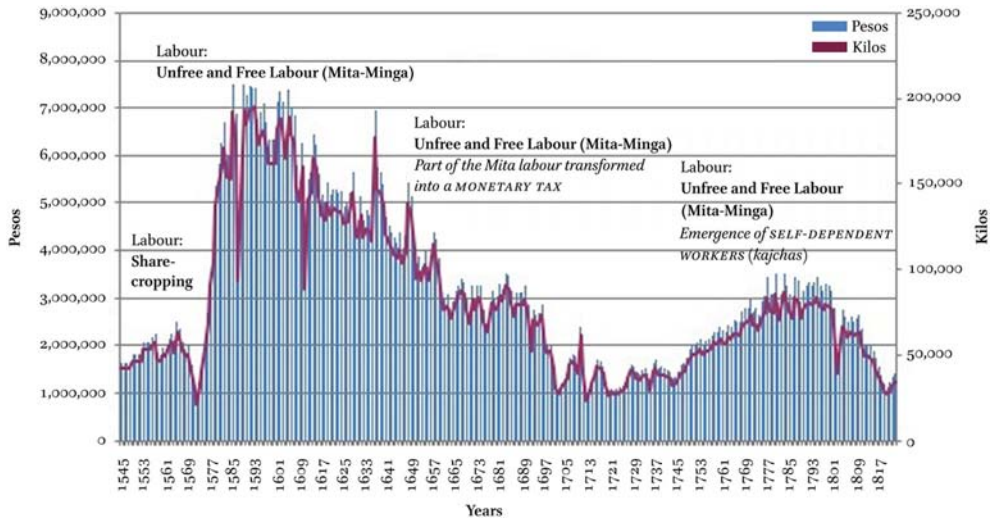


FIGURE 6.14 Silver production in Potosí and the main labour relations, 1545–1817¹¹⁵

Although no name has been given to these labour relations, it is clear that there was a system of sharecropping or a kind of lease of the property.

Significant changes were introduced by the Viceroy Toledo between 1572 and 1576 due mainly to the scarcity of high-grade metals. The indigenous smelting and casting technique was replaced by the amalgamation process (the blending of pulverised ore with mercury), which became the main refining technology. This process required the provision of mercury from the mine of Huancavelica, water for the refining mills and an important contingent of manpower now obliged to work as *corvée* workers. The ensemble of these changes explains the boom in production after 1577.

The constant supply of labour was based on an old and sophisticated Inca system of work, called the *mita*. The term *mita* in the quechua and aymara languages means ‘turn’ or to work in turn. The Spaniards continued the tradition but introduced changes. The system meant that approximately 14,000 males between 18 and 50 years of age from 17 provinces in a radius of roughly 300 km were obliged to go to work in the mines and mills under the leadership of their local Indian authorities (*caciques* or *curacas*). They were directed by *mita* captains, at first six and later eleven of them, who were also Indians but were overseen by the Spanish authorities in Potosí. *Mitayos* workers have been

115 Garner Perú Sheets, based in TePaske. Inside my desk. www.insidemysdesk.com. The labour relations distinguished in the graphic have been added by the author.

described as both 'draft labour' and 'unfree labour'. They went to Potosí with their families, meaning that more than 40,000 people arrived in Potosí every year.

The *mita* workers (or draft labour) formed one part of Potosí's labour system and the other part was made up of the *minga* workers. In so far as the *mita* was considered to be unfree labour, the *mingas* appear as free labour. Nevertheless, the research that I have been conducting has led me to establish that we should speak of a single system of work, the *mita-minga* system, instead of two separate and opposed categories of labourers. The same people could work as unfree workers or *mitayos* for one week and as free workers or *minga* for two weeks after that. The ensemble as a whole can thus be understood as a system that combined low-wage corvée or *mita* with the well-paid *minga* work.

The unfree workers or *mitayos* and the free workers or *mingas* received a wage for their work and the amount of all workers, in one year, at an average of 110 pesos year would be around two million pesos, while Potosí was producing almost three times as much in the boom period and around three million pesos after 1630 (Table 6.5).

The *mitayo* workers declined from 14,000 *mitayos* – as established by Toledo in 1573–5 – to no more than 4,000 at the end of the seventeenth century: a fall of up to 70 percent and to around 3,000 in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁶ Although we do not know the exact role played by diseases and working conditions, internal migration was one of the main causes of this drastic reduction.¹¹⁷ The flight of people to take refuge in other provinces where they were not registered, or that were not liable for *mita* service, was then one of the most important consequences of the *mita*.

Another important change was the fulfilment of *mita* obligations in payments of silver – or the 'metamorphosis of the *mita*' (Cole). In this new arrangement, the *mitayos* workers paid money to avoid going to the mines, subsidising the hiring of *mingas* to take their place.¹¹⁸ This would mean that the labour corvée was transformed into a monetary corvée. In the mid-seventeenth cen-

116 The number of *mitayos* or workers was nevertheless only 3,199 each year instead of 17,000 (Decree of Viceroy Castelfuerte, 1736; Tandeter 1981, pp. 102–3).

117 These migrations were part of indigenous strategies to escape from the *mita*, by settling in other towns and communities as 'outsiders' (*forasteros*) or in landed estates (*haciendas*) as tenant labourers (*yanacunas*). There was, then, a far-reaching redistribution of the Andean population, which took place fundamentally in the seventeenth century.

118 See Bakewell 1984, p. 197 and Cole, 1985, p. 57. Tandeter 1992, p. 88. For 1801, Tandeter pointed out that in some provinces, 75 percent of the people were paying instead of going to work.

TABLE 6.5 *Wages at the end of sixteenth century and silver production in Potosí*¹¹⁹

| | Wages per day | Wages per week in pesos | Wages per month in pesos | Wages for 12 months or 1 year in pesos | TOTAL WAGES OF WORKERS 1 YEAR AT 110 PESOS year | SILVER BETWEEN 1580–1630 | SILVER after 1630 |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Unfree Workers or Mitayos | 3.5 reales | 2 | 8 | 96 pesos | | | |
| Free Workers or Mingas | 4 reales | 2.5 | 10 | 120 pesos | | | |
| 14,000 Workers | | | | | 2,100,000 | | |
| Production of silver for 1 year | | | | | | More than 5,000,000 pesos | More than 3,000,000 pesos |

tury, the communities handed over very few *mitayos*, which at a time of crisis could also be an attractive option for the employers who preferred to receive cash, diverting these sums to other economic activities. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it seems that the payment of the work due in money gradually disappeared in close relation with the upturn in mining activity from 1730.¹²⁰

In this period another category of workers appeared: the *kajchas* or self-employed. They extracted ores during the weekend and refined them in the *trapiches* or rudimentary mills. The people who owned these mills, known as *trapicheros*, formed a world with great internal differences which can be seen more clearly at both extremes. Some sold small portions of silver for values which did not exceed 20 pesos. Most of them sold for values below 200 pesos, representing 75 percent of the total *trapicheros*, although together they sold

119 The amount calculated for unfree workers and free workers for one year does not correspond to the time actually worked by them since the *mitayos* worked one week out of three and thus for a total of 17 weeks per year. These estimates attempt to compare the amount of wages compared with total silver production.

120 In 1793 the Governor of Potosí, Sanz, replying to the *Discourse against the mita*, explained that the 'abuse' that existed before was also due to the fact that at that time the mines were only exploiting the waste and remains that had accumulated. AGN Buenos Aires, Ibid. f. 98.

hardly 12 percent of the total silver. At the other extreme, 25 *trapicheros* sold a little more than 60 percent of all the silver.¹²¹

It is clear, then, that the changes introduced in the labour relationships at the end of the 1570s explain the period of boom in Potosí production but also in the global production of silver. But the *mita* work did not remain the same and the workers look to have a share in the production, becoming self-independent workers at the end of the colonial period.

Conclusions

For more than three centuries, silver and gold were Spanish America's main export. In the eighteenth century, as we have seen, they amounted to more than 70 percent. Potosí, like other regions in America, produced silver for centuries, but it also flowed away for centuries. The non-mining sector, mainly represented by cochineal, indigo, wood, pearls, silk, medicinal plants and sugar, represented between 14 and 20 percent of exports between 1561 and 1650, while 90 percent of the silver was sent to the metropolis.¹²² According to some estimates, 80 percent of the silver and gold passed through the European economy.¹²³ This would mean that just 20 percent was retained in the Americas. TePaske shows, nevertheless, that a great proportion of crown revenues had been retained since the seventeenth century. In the Viceroyalty of Peru during the last decade of the sixteenth century, 64 percent of all revenue flowing to Lima went to Castile. This figure dropped to 45 percent between 1601 and 1610 and to 12 percent in 1660.¹²⁴ The retention of silver could have sparked economic vitality in the regions. This dynamism could further explain the inter-regional trade in the Peruvian space analysed by Assadourian.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, it is also essential to underline, on the one hand, that the Crown revenues retained in the region were used to maintain the Spaniards' dominions in the Americas.¹²⁶ On the other hand, it is important to note that 93 percent of the silver and gold

121 Barragán 2017.

122 Sempat-Assadourian 1982, p. 211 and p. 216. Garner maintains, based on Sluiter's data, that between 1575 and 1650, 83 percent went outside America: 76 percent to Europe and 7 percent to the East (Garner 2006). Cf. www.insidemysdesk.com/lapubs/NetDraft-SilverGoRev.pdf [last accessed February 2013].

123 Cross 1983, p. 404.

124 Te Paske 1983, pp. 428–9.

125 Sempat-Assadourian 1982.

126 TePaske 1983, p. 431.

shipped from Buenos Aires between 1715 and 1778 consisted of private and particular remittances, as we have seen, following Jumar.¹²⁷

Last but not least, silver was not reinvested in Potosí or in the region. The plans to reinvigorate the mining came too late, in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Thaddeus Von Nordenflicht's technical improvements, which tried to introduce a new amalgamation process, is one of the best examples. The changes were a failure due, mainly, to the heavy investments that were necessary, because the producers of the time were not able to undertake them. No big work or technical improvements came after 1575. Under these conditions, the name of Potosí, like the silver it produced, faded away. Yet global trade was certainly inconceivable without both.

127 Jumar 2000.

Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946

*Touraj Atabaki**

Introduction

With the outbreak of World War II, Iran adopted an official policy of neutrality, and for two years this policy was respected on the part of both the British and the Soviets. However, when the Germans began fighting on an Eastern front, both these major powers changed their stance towards Iran. The change in their policy was primarily an attempt to bolster the Soviet Union's defence efforts, which were on the verge of collapse. In comparison to other routes available for shipping supplies to the Soviet Union (from San Francisco to Murmansk or Arkhangelsk), the Persian Gulf-Caucasus route was by far the most practical and convenient. Subsequently, on the pretext of indicting Reza Shah for having pro-German sympathies, the British and Soviet troops invaded Iran on 25 August 1941.

Following the invasion of Iran, a Tripartite Treaty of Alliance was signed by Britain, the Soviet Union and Iran in January 1942. According to Article Five of this Treaty, 'the Allied armed forces shall be withdrawn from Iranian territory no later than six months after all hostilities between the Allied powers and Germany and her associates have been suspended by the conclusion of an armistice or armistices or on conclusion of peace between them, whichever date is earlier'.¹ Following the capitulation of the Third Reich on 8 May 1945, and the Japanese surrender on 2 September of the same year, the Allies enjoyed a six-month interval until the stipulated deadline of 2 March 1946. Whereas the United States and Britain withdrew their troops from Iran before the completion of the set time limit,² the Soviet military withdrawal from Iran was

* In preparing this paper I benefitted from comments by Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi. My gratitude goes also to Robabeh Motaghedi and Abdolreza Alamdar for their valuable assistance.

- 1 For the text of the Tripartite Treaty, signed by Britain, USSR and Iran, see Hurewitz 1956, pp. 233–4.
- 2 Vail Motter 1952, pp. 281–3. For the United States' account of the Allied Military withdrawal from Iran, see Ghobad Irani 1978, pp. 25–34.



FIGURE 7.1 *Map of Khuzestan, Iran*

SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVE OF IRAN, DOC NO. 293-1424

only secured following hectic negotiations with the Iranian government in the heady days of the 'Crisis of Azerbaijan', on 9 May of the same year.³

With some five years of clandestine activities in the southern province of Khuzestan behind it, the Labour Day of May 1946 was the first occasion for the communist Tudeh Party and its affiliated labour union, the Central Council of Federated Trade Unions – CCFTU – to embark upon a show of strength in the province's oil industry. The May Day commemoration was followed by a chain of strikes, which went on to envelop the entire industry and reached their bloody denouement on 14 July 1946. The massive involvement of the oil workers and the magnitude of violence exercised both by the military and the crowd during the short-lived general walkout, along with the repressive policy consequently pursued against the labour movement in the oil industry, might

3 For a detailed account of the 'Azerbaijan Crisis', see Atabaki 2000.

be illuminated by providing a tentative response to the following questions: Who were the chief elements and agencies involved in this strike? What was the setting and what were the sources of their involvement? Can this strike and the bloody clashes which consumed the evening of 14 July be regarded as premeditated by some of the actors involved or were they rather merely the outcome of unforeseeable and contingent accident?

Labour, Work and Life during World War II

The occupation of Iran by the Allied Forces was a turning point in the history of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Elwell-Sutton, who served on the staff of the labour administration of the AIOC in Abadan during 1935–8 and later from 1943–7 as Press Attaché and Head of Broadcasting at the British mission in Tehran, recalls how the occupation of Iran came as a relief to the Oil Company:

For eight years [prior to the occupation] British management and staff had been irked by the painful necessity of considering Persian susceptibilities, of paying lip service to the national revival dimly observed in the rest of the country. Many fundamental changes had taken place. Persian numerals now shared pride of place with English on the backs of cars and the gates of bungalows. First and second-class staff had become senior and junior grade (third class remained third class – after all it sounded different in Persian, and anyway they knew no English). The letters ‘B.P.’ on the petrol pumps, it turned out, stood not for British Petroleum, as everyone thought, but for Benzin-e Pars – the petrol of Persia.⁴

The occupation provoked major changes in Iranian labour employment. By 1942, some quarter of a million Iranians, mostly agricultural labourers, gained employment with the Allied Occupation Forces and opted for the country's major cities as their permanent residence.⁵ One of the early economic concordats reached by the Allies was to refrain from adopting any wage increases during their occupation. In 1939 the average minimum wage basket, made up of flour, meat, oil and housing, cost 11 Rials, while in the south of the country, the Oil Company set the minimum wage of local unskilled labour at 5 or 6 Rials per

4 Elwell-Sutton 1955, p. 138. This narrative could be considered as Elwell-Sutton's memoir.

5 There are numerous reports from provinces reaching the capital on agricultural labour leaving the villages for urban employment. An example can be found in: Iran National Archive, DocNo. 240–993.

day.⁶ This was the minimum wage endorsed by the APOC following the strike of 1929.⁷ During the period of 1936–41, although the total index of the cost of living increased by 2.5 percent, the Oil Company nonetheless maintained the minimum wage endorsed in 1929.⁸

The immediate economic outcome of the Allied occupation in Iran was high inflation. By 1944, the index of the cost of living reached as high as ten times that of the year preceding the outbreak of war. The immediate economic hardship caused considerable employment problems for the Oil Company. The wages paid by the British and particularly the US armies in their affiliated service sectors led many workers in the oil industry to quit their jobs in the AIOC and to join these sectors for better pay. To stop the outflow of workers, the AIOC did not have any option but to increase salaries. The minimum wage was first raised to 11 Rials and then to 16 Rials.⁹ However, to avoid additional wage increases, the AIOC signed a pact with the British and the US armies not to raise the minimum wages in Khuzestan.¹⁰

On the eve of the Allied Occupation, the Iranian oil industry, with nearly 30,000 employees on its payroll, was the major labour-oriented industry in Iran. In the course of the following years, with the increase of the Abadan Refinery's throughput from 7 million tons in 1941 to 16.5 million tons in 1945 (an increase partially related to the WWII Soviet Aid Programme), the oil industry witnessed a formidable expansion and the number of its employees reached close to 65,000 in 1946. Although in the 1930s, following the ratification of a new agreement in 1933, the Oil Company was mandated to adopt the intensive Iranisation of labour in the oil industry, the rapid expansion of the oil industry in the WWII period and the scarcity of local skilled labour once more induced the AIOC to turn to Indian migrant workers as a potential source of manpower.

The AIOC's labour recruitment regulations were altered during the war. In the post-WWI period, due to pressure from the Iranian government, the Oil Company had to advertise for available positions in local as well as national newspapers.¹¹ During WWII, the Oil Company decided to implement a different practice to using national newspapers. Every week on Saturday, Sunday

6 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

7 Fateh 1979, p. 434.

8 Fateh 1979, p. 434.

9 BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249, *Some Impressions in Iran: March 1946*.

10 Fateh 1979, p. 435.

11 For the history of labour in the Iranian oil industry during World War I, see Atabaki and Ehsani 2014, pp. 261–87.

TABLE 7.1 *Employment in the Anglo-Persian/Anglo-Iranian Oil Company 1940–50*¹²

| Year | Iranian | Indian | British | Other | Total |
|------|---------|--------|---------|-------|--------|
| 1940 | 26,484 | 1,158 | 1,056 | 15 | 28,713 |
| 1941 | 28,035 | 1,005 | 918 | 9 | 29,967 |
| 1942 | 41,081 | 1,716 | 1,261 | 234 | 44,292 |
| 1943 | 44,944 | 2,102 | 1,442 | 279 | 48,767 |
| 1944 | 60,073 | 2,493 | 1,710 | 476 | 64,752 |
| 1945 | 60,366 | 2,498 | 2,357 | 240 | 65,461 |
| 1946 | 60,807 | 2,557 | 1,869 | 169 | 65,402 |
| 1947 | 67,190 | 2,461 | 2,134 | 89 | 71,874 |
| 1948 | 76,994 | 2,126 | 2,472 | 81 | 81,673 |
| 1949 | 78,162 | 1,977 | 2,698 | 82 | 82,912 |
| 1950 | 72,681 | 1,744 | 2,725 | 34 | 77,184 |

and Monday mornings, the Company would select the workforce required from amongst the crowds of labourers gathered in front of the AIOC's Labour Office in Abadan, Tehran and Isfahan. Following medical tests, the recruited labourers were employed for an arbitrary probationary period on the minimum wage. During the probationary period, which could last for months, the labourers had no access to healthcare, or other welfare benefits, including food rationing, education or housing, if these were available at all.

According to a report compiled by the International Labour Office, in addition to the workers directly employed by the AIOC, there were other workers whom the Oil Company assigned certain work on casual or seasonal bases. The casual workers were not considered part of the AIOC's regular labour force and its numbers were never included in the Oil Company's official statistics. The casual workers were contract workers who worked on refinery sites and were responsible for tasks such as riveting and tank cleaning, painting and handling sulphur and on the oilfield pipe track, road construction and maintenance work. In 1945, in addition to the 29,704 wage earners employed directly by the Oil Company in the Abadan Refinery, there were 6,953 contract workers, increasing the total workforce by some 23 percent. For the oilfield, during the same period, the figures were 8,613 contract workers in addition to the 5,190

¹² Source: Bamberg 1994.

workers directly on the Company's payroll, making the contract workers 60 per cent of the total work force.¹³

The contract workers, a significant number of whom were of Khuzestani Arab ethnic background, never enjoyed the relative security of the workers directly employed by the Oil Company. The contractors paid 'their workers less than the legal minimum wage and bypass[ed] the statutory regulations concerning the payment of weekly rest days, the rates for overtime, holidays with pay, and so on'.¹⁴ In addition to being paid less than the minimum wage, contract workers were not allowed to benefit from the services provided by the Oil Company, such as purchasing subsidised goods in Company stores. A corollary of such practices was that the income of contract workers amounted to half of the purchasing power of Oil Company workers.¹⁵

During the war, the widespread famine, inflation and ever-increasing cost of living made the living conditions of the labouring poor intolerable. The consumption of domestically produced foodstuffs by the Allied Forces, if not the primary cause, was a contributory cause to this famine.¹⁶ For example, between 1941 and 1946 the supply of livestock throughout the country was dramatically curtailed. At one point, 'up to 1000 sheep and goats were slaughtered daily in Ahwaz Field Butchery' alone,¹⁷ or in the north of the country in 1942 the export of rice to the Soviet Union or for the consumption of the Red Army caused major grievances amongst the poor in the provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran.¹⁸ As a result, the country's major urban centres became the scene of daily protests, sometimes turning into violence. The most serious incidents were seen in Tehran when a bread riot broke out in December 1942 and ended with 20 dead and 700 injured.¹⁹ In Kazeroun, in the south, during the same period the crowds looted the city's grain depot and bakeries.²⁰ From the oil province of Khuzestan there were also reports on popular unrest in Ahvaz and Abadan, chiefly in protest against the high cost of living.²¹ While the Oil Company had an agreement with the Allied Occupation Forces not to raise

13 International Labour Office 1950, pp. 27–30.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Iran National Archive, DocNo. 240–993.

17 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

18 Iran National Archive, DocNo. 240–1132 and DocNo. 240–24733.

19 McFarland, Stephen L. 1985, pp. 51–65.

20 Iran National Archive, DocNo. 240–8362.

21 Iran National Archive, DocNo. 240–993.

TABLE 7.2 *Ration commodities sold at the Company's stores*²²

| Commodities | Weekly ration | Subsidised price rls. | Market price rls. | Monthly ration ²³ | Subsidised price rls. | Market price rls. |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Wheat | 5 kilos | 20 | 30 | | | |
| Tea | 335 grams | 5 | 13 | | | |
| Sugar | 335 grams | 10 | 19.50 | | | |
| Rice | | | | 5 kilos | 35 | 45 |
| Cigarettes | | | | 250 | 75 | 75 |
| Dried milk | | | | 450 grams | 10 | — |
| Ghee | | | | 2 kilos | 120 | 184 |

wage rates, in the south – with the scarcity of essential commodities and ever-increasing commodity prices²⁴ threatening the continuation of work and the flow of oil – the AIOC piloted a new scheme of rationing staples such as wheat, rice, ghee, sugar and tea for its employees. By establishing food stores with subsidised foodstuffs in workers' residential districts, the Company sought to resolve one of the key issues afflicting its workforce and thereby stave off the possibility of further unrest.

However, the cooperative initiatives set up by the AIOC did not alleviate the hardship facing the labouring poor working for the Oil Company. While the minimum wage throughout the country was 30 Rials, in the oil industry the minimum wage was 16 Rials, alongside free rations of flour, sugar and tea to the value of approximately 8 Rials per day at Company prices.²⁵ In mid-May 1946, after the May Day mass demonstration of oil workers which was followed by a number of sporadic strikes in different departments of the refinery as well as the oil field, the AIOC increased the minimum daily wage to 35 Rials. This wage did not include free rations but the same rations were available at controlled prices.

The increase in the minimum wage by nearly 120 percent, while demonstrating the deficiencies of the previous minimum wage, was still not adequate considering that the cost of living during the war had risen by more than 900

²² Source: National Archive of Iran, DocNo. 240-1424, 1946.

²³ For families: each adult member received 8.5 kg and each child member 4.5 kg of wheat plus 220 grams of tea.

²⁴ BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823.

²⁵ BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249, Some Impressions in Iran: March 1946.

percent.²⁶ Employees under 18 (AIOC did not accept children under 14), the majority of whom were apprentices and trainees, received the minimum wage. Women labourers – employed in small numbers in medical services, laundry and sanitation and not on the industrial sites – also received the minimum wage.²⁷ Despite this, there was still no sign of Friday pay (a paid day of rest) or disability compensation in the industry. These were all conceded in the aftermath of the 1946 strike.

High inflation and low pay were not the only burdens faced by workers in the oil industry. The dearth of appropriate shelter and housing was another grievance which made the life of workers precarious. Life in the labour districts of Abadan, such as in Bahmanshir, was 'too disgraceful to waste words, paper and ink on describing its pitiful condemned condition'.²⁸ According to Ivor Jones, the AIOC's General Manager, the Oil Company's housing policy was that no houses should be provided for unskilled labour, which in Abadan comprised 36.5 percent of a total 31,259 labour employees.²⁹ He admitted that 'housing conditions in the town [Abadan] were deplorable' and refers to a case where he saw 'sixty people – men, women and children – living in a room 12 by 6 yards [11 by 5.5 meters] with mud floor, leaking roof, one door only, and no sanitary arrangement or water where the rent was Rials 500 per month'.³⁰

Some eyewitness accounts further reveal the abysmal conditions under which workers were forced to live, some thirty years after the much-feted black gold was discovered and pumped out in ever-greater quantities to the international market. In 1945, the AIOC, with a total number of more than 60,000 employees in the refinery and oilfields, had only 5,500 houses for married workers and 2,900 rooms for bachelor workers.³¹ Manouchehr Farmanfarmaian, then Minister of Finance, recalls his visit to Abadan in 1945, attesting that 'the workers lived in a shantytown called Kaghazabad, or Paper Town, without running water or electricity, let alone such luxuries as iceboxes or fans. In winter

26 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. See also Elwell-Sutton, L.P. op. cit., p. 140. The official rate of exchange at that time was 1 Rial = £0.011 = US\$0.031.

27 Out of 783 women employed in Abadan and its fields in 1949, there were 63 non-Iranian salaried employees in the medical services and 449 Iranian salaried employees in the medical services and for commercial work. There were also 271 Iranian women wage earners, of whom about half were trainee clerks and the remainder chiefly sanitary and laundry workers. International Labour Office 1950.

28 BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249, Discussion on Labour Condition, 1, March 1946.

29 BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249, Jones to Elkington, 7 March 1946.

30 Ibid.

31 Fateh 1979, p. 435.

the earth flooded and became a flat, perspiring lake. The mud in town was knee-deep, and canoes ran alongside the roadways for transport. When the rains subsided, clouds of nipping, small-winged flies rose from the stagnant waters to fill the nostrils, collecting in black mounds along the rims of cooking pots and jamming the fans at the refinery with an unctuous glue'.³² The eyewitness account of Farmanfarmaian is supported by a report drawn up by the British Parliamentary Mission visiting the Iranian oil industry in 1946. According to this report, while there were 'splendidly built modern houses with air-conditioning and ice-boxes' in Abadan, there were also 'individually built shacks in some cases the only roof being empty paper cement bags'. It also reported an instance of a Company worker who had been waiting 38 years for a 'decent house' or 'families of 12 people living in two rooms'. However, perhaps the most damning eyewitness account was when members of the mission saw some '200 old men were being housed under distressing conditions' in an old bakery.³³ These eyewitness accounts made their way into a meticulously prepared report compiled by Donald McNeil, then a London based AIOC Manager for Industrial Relations. In his confidentially circulated essay entitled 'The Lesson of 1946', he addressed the recurring question of housing in Abadan in the following words:

The vast majority of our labour force are still living in scandalous accommodation in urine-tainted squalor – in little manzels (houses), built against the hillside as in Janaki village and a dozen other places in fields, or houses of empty paper cement bag construction as in Kaghazabad in Abadan, without sanitation or no ventilation at all.

Overcrowding is rampant and up to ten persons sleep on the damp floor of ten-foot room, huddled together to keep warm in the winter or to keep out of the sun in the summer afternoon. These are the conditions under which many of our workers live in what is misleadingly called private accommodation, and unfortunately, some of these living in old style non-standard Company accommodation have very similar conditions.³⁴

32 Farmanfarmaian 1997, pp. 184–5.

33 BP Archive, ArcRef. 43762. Report of British M.P.s' visit to Persia, 19 June 1946. See also BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249, Jones to Elkington, 7 March 1946.

34 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

Finally, in a report submitted to the Iranian government by the AIOC in 1946, the Company conceded that although the number of employees in the oil industry increased sharply during the war, no measures were adopted to build decent shelters for the workers. In Abadan, with a population of 120,000 in 1946, of whom 85 percent were the Company's employees and their dependents, there were only 5,600 Company houses, including the exclusive bungalows and furnished houses allocated for white-collar workers and clerks in the Braim and Bowardeh quarters. The majority of the salaried registered workers and waged contractor workers were still living in tents and huts in virtually uninhabitable districts such as Abolhasani – surrounded by marshes and swarming with mosquitos – or the overcrowded and suffocating atmosphere of Abadan's municipal districts, where local landlords exploited workers with impunity.³⁵ It was only after the 1946 strike that the AIOC launched a new housing scheme to construct liveable premises for its married employees in the new districts of Bahar and Farhabad or rooms with four beds for single workers in Ahmadabad.³⁶

During WWII, in addition to the threat of famine and food scarcity, Iranians were also made to face the perils of diseases and epidemics as well. In 1942 typhus reached the northern Iranian provinces with the Polish soldiers and civilian evacuees arriving from the Soviet Union.³⁷ It soon spread throughout the country and reached the southern province of Khuzestan. The oil industry, which owned two hospitals in Abadan (350 beds) and Masjid Suleiman (86 beds) encountered the new disease along with the longstanding and more enduring ones such as trachoma, malaria, tuberculosis and the plague. The scarcity of medical doctors during the war ensured that one of the Company's medical officers attended to 'as many as 150 to 400 sick employees ... in 8 hours ... making the labour disinclined to go to hospital'.³⁸ The Company's dental service was not competent either. 'Many of our labour have to go without their teeth because of lack of attention [since] there are 2 or 3 dentists for about 40,000 labour and staff excluding families'.³⁹ The high fees of visiting doctors who worked in the town, independent of the Oil Company, in addition to the 'fabulous' cost of drugs 'left the Company's labour employees very desperate'.⁴⁰ In an 'internal and confidential' report, an especially atrocious case was described in the following words:

35 Iran National Archive. DocNo. 1947. 293–1424. International Labour Office 1950, p. 31.

36 Iran National Archive. DocNo. 1947. pp. 293–1424.

37 Dehqan-Nezhad and Lotfi 2010.

38 BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249, Discussion on Labour Condition, 1, March 1946.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

Consider a man after 25 years' service contracting tuberculosis. He is paid his gratuity, which is only sufficient to keep him for a very short time, and in addition he immediately falls into the hands of local doctors who give the man hopes of a cure through treatment, thus draining his entire gratuity. It is a pitiful sight to see these people, especially when they have a large family to look after their income discontinued, and their Company house withdrawn. One can understand why they dislike going to hospital ... The release of such employees into the town without any attention and income can only cause a future major social catastrophe in Abadan.⁴¹

Despite the Company's health schema being organised into two branches of curative and preventive treatment and promising to be non-discriminatory regarding the working statuses of the Company's employees, there were nevertheless complaints about the poor treatment and services offered to workers in clinics. For example, during the visit of the British Parliamentary Mission, the workers' representatives initiated an Abadan city expedition, independently of the AIOC's own prearranged excursion, whereby they intended to expose and unmask the appalling and degrading conditions endured by Iranian workers. The mission was guided to the Abadan Hospital, where they heard complaints of 'crowded conditions and poor food'. On one occasion the members of the mission were given samples of bread given to English workers and contrasted it with that given to Iranians. The mission attested that 'the latter certainly seemed to be of very poor quality'.⁴²

World War II and the Birth of Labour Activism in the Oil Industry

Although during the reign of Reza Shah (1924–41) an attempt was made to regulate industrial relations for the first time by declaring a pseudo-labour law, any endeavour to form or promote labour associations was ferociously suppressed. With the abdication of the reigning monarch, the caretaker government of Foroughi was inaugurated with the chief objective of securing political stability and territorial integrity, albeit temporarily, in order to sustain the allied support route to the Soviet Union. One of the measures adopted by the Foroughi cabinet was to declare a general amnesty for all political prisoners. A large number of these political prisoners were members of the outlawed Communist Party of

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² BP Archive, ArcRef. 43762. Report of British M.P.s' visit to Persia, 19 June 1946.

Iran or other communist networks, as well as labour-union activists. Amongst the latter there were Youssef Eftekhari, Ali Omid and Rahim Hamdad, the three labour activists who led the 1929 strike in the oil industry. Eftekhari was a graduate of the Moscow-based University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) who later was dispatched to Abadan by the Soviet Labour Union in 1927 in order to found a labour union in the oil industry. Following his role in the 1929 strike, he was arrested and imprisoned in Tehran where he later met other Iranian communists. When the news of the Soviet Great Terror of 1935–39 spread through the walls of Tehran's prisons, it naturally provoked much debate amongst the communist prisoners. While the majority of the communist prisoners endorsed the Stalinist purge, Youssef Eftekhari never concealed his opposition to it. Assuming such a stance soon led to his being denounced as a Trotskyist by his fellow inmates, though he himself never identified his anti-Stalinist stance with Trotskyism.⁴³

Following his release from prison, Eftekhari decided not to join the newly founded Tudeh Party or its affiliated labour union. Instead, together with his old comrades, he founded an independent labour union, Ettehadiyyeh Kargaran Iran (Trade Union of Iran – TUI) with *Giti* as its official newspaper. Concurrently, in 1942 the Tudeh Party founded its own affiliated labour union, the Shora-ye Markazi Ettehadiyyeh-haye Kargari Iran (Central Council of the Trade Unions of Iran – CCTU) which a year later following its merging with some minor unions, changed its name to Shora-ye Motaheddeh Markazi Kargaran va Zahmatkeshan-e Iran (Central Council of the Unified Trade Unions of Iran – CCFTU) and published *Zafar*, its official newspaper.

The leadership of the CCTU or CCFTU had strong ties with the Tudeh party. Of the 14 leading members of the CCTU elected at the founding congress, all were active cadres of the Tudeh Party; four were members of the Central Committee of the party and another four later joined its leadership. Three were veteran members of the early Communist Party of Iran; 10 had experienced protracted periods of imprisonment in the Reza Shah era and 9 had a history of labour-union activism.⁴⁴

During the war, one of the major concerns of the CCFTU was how to pursue its activities without disrupting the Allied support for the Soviet fronts. During the war some two-thirds of Iran's economy was in one way or another associated with Allied activities in the country and any possible disruption

43 See Youssef Eftekhari's memoir: Eftekhari 1991. See also Atabaki, 2012, pp. 298–323.

44 For a detailed account of the lives and political careers of individuals in the WWII labour movement in Iran, see Atabaki 1988, pp. 35–60.

of this association could be considered an act of sabotage.⁴⁵ The oil and its supply to the Soviet Union was a hallowed sector where the CCFTU understood labour agitation as strictly prohibited. Abstaining from open agitation among the labour of the oil and the transport industries, chiefly rail workers during the war, the CCFTU decided to commence activities in the central and northern provinces of the country. Meanwhile, when pursuing its activities the independent TUI was less concerned about jeopardising its relations with the Allies, especially the Soviet Union. During the war the TUI expanded its network throughout the country and founded its headquarters in Abadan, Ahvaz and the western province of Kermanshah, where the Oil Company had a small installation and refinery. Furthermore, it organised two consecutive strikes amongst workers of the Iranian National Rail Road and Kermanshah oil installation in 1943, both of which demanded a pay rise. The Tudeh Party, its affiliated union, the CCFTU and even the Soviet Union labour syndicate condemned these actions vigorously. Trud, the central organ of the All Soviet Trade Unions, called the TUI the 'fascist fifth column' and denounced Youssef Eftekhari as a 'dangerous provocateur'.⁴⁶

With successive Allied victories against the Axis powers, especially on the Eastern fronts and with the Soviet triumph in the Battle of Stalingrad in February 1943, there was a palpable shift in Soviet policy in Iran. This was accompanied by a concomitant change in the political stance and policies of the Tudeh Party and the CCFTU, both nationally and internationally. According to a report compiled by the British diplomatic mission in Iran, despite the Tudeh Party having a more cooperative policy toward the Allies in the early days of the war in Iran, following the Soviet victories in early 1943 there was a stark shift in the stance of both the Tudeh and the CCFTU. In one instance it was described as becoming 'increasingly one-sided pro-Russian' and as poised to leap southwards in order to establish a network amongst the workers in the oil industry.⁴⁷

After some thirty years since the first discovery of oil in 1908, the absence of a single platform to arbitrate on behalf of labour licenced the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC)/AIOC to deal with issues related to workers' living and working conditions on an individual rather than a collective basis.⁴⁸ This was also true of issues pertaining to labour recruitment, wages, education, healthcare,

45 Kambakhsh 1966, pp. 30–1.

46 British National Archive, F.O. 371/45450. 'The Visit of the Soviet Trade Union Delegation to Persia'.

47 British National Archive, F.O. 371/61993.

48 On the early period of the labour history in the Iranian oil industry, see: Atabaki 2013, pp. 159–75.

housing and welfare. The Company enjoyed the liberty to discharge workers without notice and without any right to appeal against unfair dismissal.⁴⁹ Despite many indications that the birth of a new labour movement was on the horizon during this period, the Oil Company's labour policy showed little to no indication of changing accordingly.

The Allies' evacuation of southern Iran took place on 10 March 1946 along with the end of the Soviet Aid Programme. This programme, as previously mentioned, over the course of five years was binding on all active institutions and organisations, that is to say, the Oil Company, the government, the labour unions and the political parties, by means of a tacit agreement to adopt a policy. It essentially banned any kind of labour disturbances in the country's key sectors, most notably in the oil industry. The adoption of such an obstructive policy was set against the background of deteriorating working and living conditions for Iranian labourers and was in line with the Allied policy of prohibiting any break in supply of the Soviet Eastern front during WWII. Now, with the end of the war, it was the CCFTU and Tudeh Party's opportunity to seize and install the covert network, which they had crafted and nurtured during the war period, in the streets of Abadan, Aghajari and Masjid Suleiman, 'like the horse let loose in the paddock'.⁵⁰ In most of the cities of Khuzestan, the Tudeh Party and the CCFTU (or, as its provincial office was called, the Shora-ye Motaheddeh Kargaran va Zahmatkeshan-e Khuzestan (Council of Federated Trade Unions of Khuzestan)) shared offices and mutually coordinated their public activities. Furthermore, the CCFTU's recruitment policy in the oil industry was inclusive. It not only targeted Iranian workers but also the non-Iranian and – even more actively – Indian workers.⁵¹

The May Day demonstration of 1946 in Abadan took the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company by surprise. Earlier, the Oil Company, at the request of the Iranian Prime Minister, agreed to recognise 1 May as a public holiday. This was the first May Day to be publicly celebrated by oil workers for seventeen years. The last May Day that was openly celebrated by the oil workers was held in 1929 and ended with the mass arrest and expulsion of workers. Now after a respite of seventeen years, the workers had once again returned to the streets. In Abadan, the CCFTU and the Tudeh Party jointly organised a series of lively and vibrant processions and government offices and shops were closed. The rally began

49 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

50 Ibid.

51 Vezarat Kar va Tablighat, 1947, p. 10. For the life and times of the Indian workers in the Iranian oil industry, see Atabaki 2015, pp. 85–114.

from the poor district of Zulmabad on the outskirts of the old city, where on the same day the Workers' Club, the headquarters of the CCFTU in Abadan, was formally inaugurated. Some 80,000 demonstrators rallied through the old town, making every effort to turn the processions into an irrefutable symbol of, and testament to, the power and influence of the CCFTU and Tudeh Party. The march exuded a carnivalesque atmosphere as national anthems blared and workers chanted slogans in Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Armenian and Assyrian. A labour art exhibition was also held, while the march was organised and overseen by the labour organ's own administrative officers, distinguished from other demonstrators by their white armbands.⁵² At the end of the rally there were a number of anti-British speeches where the speakers denounced the Oil Company's performance in Iran. This great achievement of peaceful mass mobilisation could not be ignored or concealed in the perspicacious account of the local British consul.⁵³

The May Day procession was followed by a strike on 5 May in the Distillation Plant in solidarity with another strike in the Locomotive Section of the Abadan Refinery's workshop, which had been held some days previously. If the first strike had seen some 50 workers protesting against the violence committed by one of the British foremen, in the second strike around 350 workers protested in sympathy with their fellow-workers, calling for: (a) The reinstatement of the Locomotive Shop strikers, (b) Full pay for the days on which the strike took place, (c) Removal of the British foreman in the Locomotive Shop, and (d) The Formation of an arbitration committee to investigate labour conditions and complaints. The arbitration committee would consist of two members of the management and two members of the CCFTU. The Company agreed to points (a) and (b) but refused to comply with point (c). As for the arbitration committee, the Company agreed to set up the proposed committee, but once the strike was called off, the Company reneged on this commitment.⁵⁴

Following Abadan, it was Aghajari's turn to participate in the next sequence of the strike.⁵⁵ Producing 21 percent of Iran's total crude oil in 1946, Aghajari's oilfield was amongst the largest fields and harboured great production potential. In 1950, Aghajari produced almost 50 percent of Iranian crude oil.⁵⁶ The

52 *Zafar*, no. 264, 24 May 1946.

53 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 1st July 1946. *Zafar*, no. 248, 6 May 1946.

54 British National Archive, FO. 371/52718. Tehran to Foreign Office, 7 May 1946.

55 *Zafar*, no. 262, 22 May 1946.

56 Bamberg 1994, p. 352.

number of workers increased 'proportionately much more than that of any other Company area without a corresponding increase in housing and water services'.⁵⁷ The lack of basic labour amenities, as acknowledged by the British Legation in Tehran, together with long working hours (44.5 hours per week in winter and 45 hours in summer) provoked greater discontent amongst workers in Khuzestan than anywhere else.⁵⁸ An account of a British parliamentary delegation travelling to the region following the strike is worth citing in this regard: 'Here were to be seen Persian labour living in squalid conditions under tents, etc., and without doubt this was the worst place we visited from the point of view of social amenities'.⁵⁹

On 10 May, around 10,000 workers and staff in the Aghajari oilfield, including the domestic servants of British personnel, staged a strike. The strikers demanded a wage increase; the provision of drinking water and ice, extra pay due to their having to perform their jobs under harsh conditions, the provision of midwives and other medical facilities.⁶⁰ Although the CCFTU broadly covered the news of Aghajari's strike in the pages of its daily paper *Zafar* and supported the strike wholeheartedly, it acknowledged that the strikers were not members of the CCFTU, since 'the development of the oilfield in Aghajari was new, in contrast to Abadan or Ahvaz, and the CCFTU did not have the opportunity to unionise the oil workers and even have an office there'.⁶¹

The first reaction of the AIOC management was along the lines of those policies typically practised by the Oil Company: it rejected the workers' demands and decried the strike as a political, and therefore illegal, act. The AIOC urged the local military to send forces to the site to quell the labour unrest and maintain order: a call that was positively received by the provincial military command.⁶² Furthermore, the Oil Company threatened to cut 'absolutely' food and water supplies to the strikers, making the 'workmen', in its own words, 'starve, if they do not go back to work'⁶³ – a threat that was to some extent, if not completely, to be realised in the following days.⁶⁴

57 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

58 British National Archive, FO. 371/52718. Tehran to Foreign Office, 13 May 1946.

59 BP Archive, ArcRef. 43762. Report on Delegation to Persia, June 1946.

60 Fateh 1979, p. 438.

61 *Zafar*, nos. 257 and 258, 16 and 17 May 1946.

62 British National Archive, FO. 371/52718. Tehran to Foreign Office, 13 May 1946.

63 British National Archive, FO. 371/52718. Note of latest information from Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 14 May 1946.

64 *Zafar*, no. 256, 15 May 1946.

The strike in Aghajari coincided with the visit of an Iranian government commission to the south. The commission was headed by the new Minister of Finance Reza Qoli Bayat and the head of the Concession Department Hussein Pirnia. In a report compiled following the visit, the commission questioned the Company's contention that its failure to meet its obligation to provide essential labour amenities was due to the difficulties the Company had faced in wartime. Likewise, the commission's acknowledgement that one of the key drivers of the Aghajari strike was the workers' appalling living conditions undermined the Oil Company's allegation that the strike was instigated by the CCFTU and therefore coloured by its suspect political objectives.⁶⁵

The situation in Aghajari continued to deteriorate and there were suggestions that the CCFTU was not able to order the strikers along the lines of 'official union discipline'.⁶⁶ In a joint initiative, the British Consul in Ahvaz, together with the Oil Company's security officer and the Governor-General, Mesbah-Fatemi, prepared a list of 'principal ringleaders' to be arrested. After refusing to arrest the 'three musketeers', the Iranian government decided to send a mission to Aghajari. On 18 May, the eleventh day of the strike, the Iranian government published a new Labour Law and called for its implementation throughout the country.⁶⁷ On the same day, the government dispatched a commission to Aghajari to investigate labour conditions there as well as to negotiate calling off the strike. The composition of the four-man commission, representing the government as well as the CCFTU, was a sign of the new politics developing in Tehran. Political jockeying ultimately saw Prime Minister Qavam reshuffle his cabinet and appoint three of the most prominent Tudeh Party leaders in August 1946.

65 Fateh 1979, p. 437.

66 Zafar, no. 258, 17 May 1946. BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

67 In the new Labour Law, the question of a minimum wage and Friday pay was addressed, although with a certain degree of ambiguity:

- The minimum wages of a workman shall be determined, in accordance with the condition in each different part of the country, in such a manner as to meet the costs of living for him and his family.
- If the employer does not pay his workman wages for Friday he is bound to set his weekly wages in such a manner that the wages paid him for six days shall be equivalent to wages for seven days.

For a review of the new Labour Law, see: Ladjevardi 1985, pp. 61–4.

The oil workers in the province overwhelmingly supported the unfolding strike in Aghajari. Rallies were called in different cities in defence of the strike and money and food were collected for the strikers. The most important of these rallies was in Abadan, when on 20 May the CCFTU and the Tudeh Party called their members and supporters to congregate in Ahmadabad, a labour district of the city. In the rally one of the orators, a woman called Maryam, averred in her address to the crowd that 'the workers of Aghajari are hungry and thirsty, [while] these tyrants who are so-called civilized men have stopped their water to drink and also stopped their ration coupon, so this is the time for helping our brothers of Aghajari'.⁶⁸ She went even further and accused the Oil Company in the following terms:

The English should not think of the time of the war, when they oppressed Iranians so much that the pen is helpless to write their tyranny. Oh brothers of the same religion! Hear the production of the oil in our hand is like jewels. You must try to get these jewels back. If we don't succeed to get it back, then we are men of worst and rotten stuff. The salaries which they give to Iranians are the wages of their dogs [spending more on dog food than on workers' wages]. So we should try to get this oil and get its profit to ourselves.⁶⁹

Abrahamian beneficently postulates that this was probably the first time that a public audience in Abadan heard the call for the oil industry in Iran to be taken over by the Iranians, which was achieved in practice in the following years by the nationalisation of oil.⁷⁰

In a series of meetings that the commission had with the strikers and the Oil Company's local management in Aghajari, during the second half of May the strikers warned the Company that if within three days all of their demands were not met, they would call on all workers in the oil industry to join them in a general strike. Rather than reflecting the demands of the strikers, this threat primarily came from the CCFTU's representative in the commission. It is noteworthy that members of the commission representing the government opted for abstention when the issue of a general strike was raised. Lacking the broad support of the Iranian government in these negotiations, the representative of the AIOC had no option but to concede to certain of the strikers' demands

68 British National Archive, FO. 371/52714. British Council in Khorramshahr, Report on Tudeh activities in the oil industry, 1946.

69 Ibid.

70 Abrahamian 2013, p. 19.

and make a number of concessions. These included an 118 percent raise in the minimum wage from 16 Rials to 35 Rials per day, coupled with abolishing the system whereby part of the workers' pay was subtracted in lieu of rations of bread, tea and sugar. This act effectively increased the minimum wage by 50 percent. Furthermore, the workers were offered the prospect of buying staple commodities including the aforementioned, as well as cheese, ghee, beans and peas from the Company's stores at cost price.⁷¹ On the issues of strike pay, Friday pay (a paid day of rest) and annual vacation pay, the Oil Company's local management in Aghajari left the decision to the Company's head office in Abadan (these issues were not amongst the strikers' preliminary demands, but now comprised part of the government's new Labour Law).⁷² Continuing their mission, the members of the commission left Aghajari for Abadan where they met with the AIOC general management, who agreed to the commission's call for full strike pay. The question of Friday and annual vacation pay was left for future negotiations. Confident and satisfied with their sweeping accomplishment, the Aghajari oil workers finally called off their fifteen-day strike on 25 May.

The CCFTU, Tudeh and the liberal press in Iran overwhelmingly welcomed the conclusion of the strike in Aghajari. The CCFTU's *Zafar* congratulated Iranians for the Aghajari workers' historic victory and declared it to be a major defeat for the Oil Company and *Shahbaz*, a paper affiliated to the Tudeh Party, expressed satisfaction at the 'successful termination of the strike', adding that 'the criminal authorities of the Oil Company were forced to yield in the face of the unwavering will of the working class'.⁷³

During the following weeks, the Aghajari 'fever', as it was called by one of the Oil Company's managers, spread like wildfire throughout Khuzestan and beyond. In Tehran 1500 workers at the Oil Depot launched their one-day strike, which included demands for wage increases, as in Aghajari, from 20 Rials to 35 Rials per day, and the Oil Company's recognition of their affiliation to the CCFTU. The Oil Company swiftly accepted these demands. News of other minor strikes in different departments of the oil industry was making its way to the AIOC General Management, while there were references to workers becoming 'insolent and aggressive following a ca'caany policy, deliberately reducing of working speed and production in every section of every department of

71 British National Archive, FO. 371/52718. Tehran to Foreign Office, 23 May 1946.

72 *Zafar*, nos. 256 and 266, 26 and 27 May 1946.

73 British National Archive, FO. 371/52718. *Shahbaz*, 26 May 46.

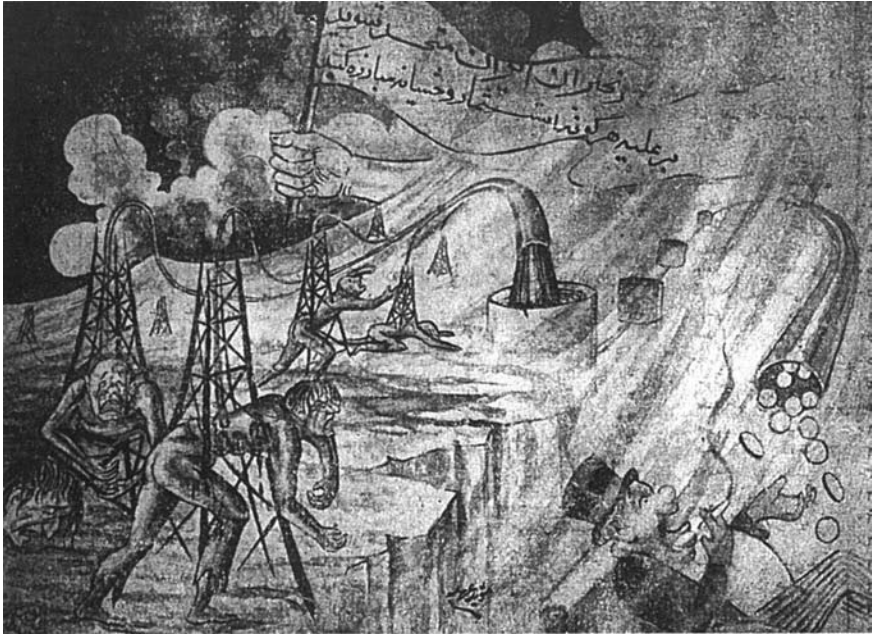


FIGURE 7.2 *Zafar*, no. 270, 31 May 1946

every area.⁷⁴ The CCFTU continued its negotiations with the Oil Company and presented a list of demands, which included Friday pay, the appointment of worker representatives in the workshops for the settlement of labour disputes, annual wage increases and transport facilities for workers. In this instance, the Oil Company showed less willingness to meet these demands, especially the issue of Friday pay. This was despite having committed itself to this promise in the preceding negotiations.

The month of June and early July 1946 were quite different from other years. All the rumours circulating indicated that many were expecting something major to take place. Such rumours are reflected in the Tehran press of the time and constituted an admixture of anxiety and confidence amongst the workers in the oil industry as well as in the country's political sphere. The CCFTU was striving to impose its hegemony upon the workers in different regions and departments of the oil industry and unionise them under its umbrella. Meanwhile, workers hoped that the Oil Company would soon accept the new Labour Law and implement all of its articles, especially the article concerning

74 BP Archive, ArcRef. 118823. Donald McNeil, *The Lesson of 1946: An Essay on the Personnel Problems of the Oil Industry in South Iran*.

Friday pay, which the Company had promised to fulfil at the end of the Aghajari strike. The news of the arbitrary arrest of CCFTU activists in different parts of Khuzestan and the return of Governor-General, Mesbah-Fatemi, who had been summoned to Tehran due to his aggressive handling of the Aghajari May strike, made the atmosphere increasingly tense and prone to volatility.⁷⁵ Such apprehensions became even more conspicuous when rumours spread throughout Abadan that certain Arab sheikhs and labour contractors – encouraged by certain Company officials who had previously worked for the British Army and who by the end of the war had joined the Oil Company – were launching a campaign for the autonomy of Khuzestan, comparable to the one that was currently unfolding in Azerbaijan.⁷⁶

Such rumours were not unfounded. In late May 1946 some Arab sheikhs visited the British Consulate in Khorramshahr and tried to persuade the consul to provide them with financial support and advice about the formation of an 'Arab Union' which would 'bind them together and form a counterpoise to the Tudeh Party whose malignant activities they regarded with no little anxiety'.⁷⁷ In response, the British Council reminded them 'he is not in a position to advise them' and 'they must follow their own star' with 'moderation [which is] particularly necessary at this juncture'.⁷⁸ If during the visit the consul's reaction to the sheikhs' plea was noncommittal, later on, and with an eye to the changing political circumstances, he decided to commit himself to the sheikhs' appeal. Besides this meeting, there were other pertinent instances, which aptly illuminated the sheikhs' ultimate aspirations. According to a memorandum sent by the Khorramshahr Police to Abadan Police, on 24 June there was a demonstration by some 7000 Arabs in Khorramshahr, carrying banners in Arabic and calling for more autonomy for the Arab province of Khuzestan.⁷⁹ Furthermore, there were reports that a certain Khuzestani Arab Sheikh 'Abdullah had

75 *Zafar*, no. 301, 9 July 1946.

76 British National Archive, WO. 208/1570. Tribal and Political Weekly Intelligence Summary, 31 December 1945.

77 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946.

78 *Ibid.*

79 The Proceedings of the Military Tribunal on the 24 July 1946 Abadan Incident, in Javanshir 1980, p. 47. This Military Tribunal for the trial of the Tudeh Party leaders and activists was inaugurated in March 1949 and lasted for three months. Although the mission of the Tribunal was to examine the attempt to assassinate the Shah of Iran on 4 February 1949, nevertheless, the entire *modus operandi* of the Tudeh party and the CCFTU was discussed in detail since their foundation. Some sessions of the Tribunal were devoted to the July 1946 strike in the oil industry and the fatal episode of Abadan.

pleaded with the Arab League (then the League of Arab States) to support the secession of Khuzestan from Iran and accept it as a new state.⁸⁰ In Abadan, leaflets were distributed announcing the inauguration of the headquarters of the Arab Union in the city on 15 July; the date corresponded with 15 Sha'ban, in the Islamic calendar, the birthdate of the Shiite Twelfth Imam. Such rumours perturbed both the CCFTU and the Tudeh Party, as there were Company officials in the AIOC who supported the Arab sheikhs' efforts. The most devoted supporters amongst the latter were Colonel Underwood, a former member of the British Military Attaché, who was employed by the Oil Company in 1945 as Chief Security Officer, and his assistant, Major Jaecock, the Company's Field Security Officer. Both men enjoyed an efficacious working relationship with the Governor-General Mesbah-Fatemi.⁸¹

The attempt by some Arab sheikhs in Abadan to form a political party to counter the activities of CCFTU and Tudeh in the province could potentially have paved the way for a bloody confrontation, inviting the local military to intervene directly.⁸² Since its formation in 1941, the Tudeh Party was clandestinely engaged in funding its bases in Khuzestan, with its activists on occasion finding themselves arrested and banished from the province.⁸³ The victory of May Day 1946 presented the opportunity to the party to extend its influence by means of a network of labour clubs throughout the entirety of the province.⁸⁴ 'There was a growing tendency for members of the Party and others to report their complaints directly to the Tudeh Party who had commenced writing strongly worded complaints to local Police or the Governorate.'⁸⁵ The escalating labour protests throughout the country, and specifically in the oil industry, confronted the Tudeh Party with a new objective of how to stamp its unrivalled authority on the protests, subsequently translating it into leverage to extract additional concessions from the government. By reviewing the stance adopted

80 Ibid. With the consent of the Iranian government, the Arab Union later was renamed as the Etehadiyeh-ye 'Ashayr-e Khuzestan (Union of Tribes of Khuzestan) see Vezarat Kar va Tablighat, 1947, p. 30.

81 British National Archive. FO. 248/1468. Underwood to General Manager AIOC 11 July 1946.

82 For the study of Iranian Arab activities in Khuzestan in the early 1940s, see Maan 2014, pp. 113–36.

83 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946.

84 BP Archive, ArcRef. 43762. Report by Elkington, 'Tudeh Party Activities Amongst Anglo-Iranian Oil Company Labour', 25 July 1946. For more on formation of the Tudeh Party see: Abrahamian 1982, pp. 326–418.

85 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946.

by the Iranian government toward the AIOC during the days of the Aghajari strike and the following labour protests, the Tudeh Party confidently presumed that it had the Iranian government on its side, at least as far as Khuzestan was concerned. However, given political developments in other parts of the country, the Tudeh Party was gradually beginning to re-evaluate its erstwhile confidence. The ability to extract any significant concessions from the Iranian government, including the possibility of joining the cabinet, required a major, albeit controlled, show of political strength. Calling a general strike was just such an option, providing its conclusion could be assured.

Now turning to the role of one of the other chief actors during this volatile and dicey period, the actions of the AIOC following the Aghajari strike were both contentious and judicious. Although the strike was settled partially with reference to the new Iranian Labour Law, the Company never committed itself to implement and enforce all of the articles of the new law, notably the article stipulating Friday pay. The Company's dubious stance against the labour movement forced the British government to dispatch a Parliamentary Mission to Khuzestan. The mission included two Labour MPs, both associated with the British Trade Union Congress (TUC), and a Conservative MP, who had at one time worked for the British-owned Imperial Bank of Iran. Although there was no consensus amongst the members of the mission, three points in their report can be highlighted: (a) the Company should confine itself to those issues pertaining directly and most immediately to labour, i.e. wages, the length of the working day and labour conditions and distance itself from all issues extraneous to the workplace such as housing, food, public health, education, etc.; (b) the Company was advised to mount a strong pro-British propaganda campaign in Iran and (c) the labour movement should be handled carefully by trained personnel with a very sound and thorough knowledge of collective bargaining.⁸⁶ Of the three counsels presented by the mission, the final two were seen as more likely to be attained. A Public Relations Office was formed in Abadan and in London and Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary in the new Labour government, called on the Oil Company to employ Frederick Leggett as the Company's labour officer.

While the British Labour government was more judicious and measured in its views on political development in Iran and the questions surrounding the labour movement in the oil industry, the Company's management was more intransigent and bellicose and dedicated to execute a final solution for labour unrest in the industry. In a letter to Edward Elkington, the influential Deputy

86 British National Archive. FO. 371/52718. TUC Report on Iranian visit. 1946.

Director of the AIOC in Iran, the Company's general manager in Iran, Ivor Jones, was willing to go so far as to claim that it is 'probably not an exaggeration to say that at least 75 percent of our labour are willingly or otherwise members of the [Tudeh] Party and that a number of our junior staff are also actively associated with it'.⁸⁷ Elkington also firmly alleged that the Tudeh Party was in 'the position to bring the entire operation of the Company to a standstill at any given moment'.⁸⁸ For local civilian and military representatives of the Iranian government, who enjoyed regular cooperation with the Company's management, the ultimate solution to restive, disgruntled labour was nothing but the complete termination of the Tudeh Party and CCFTU activities in the region. But this would only be achievable if they could bring the entire province under military rule, that is to say, by initiating martial law. This option was raised on numerous occasions by Mesbah-Fatemi, the Governor-General.

On 5 July, faced with mounting frustration amongst workers, the CCFTU provincial office once again presented its demands to the Oil Company and set 13 July as the final deadline for meeting its demands. Although the Company's representatives committed themselves to the deadline, the instruction from the Company's Tehran office was more evasive and postponed further negotiations in Tehran and with the Iranian government.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, despite the CCFTU headquarters in Tehran dispatching a telegraph to the local union instructing them to refrain from any radical actions, on 10 July the Aghajari workers, once again and without any deliberation with the CCFTU, launched another strike.⁹⁰ On the same day the Council of Ministers in Tehran authorised the Governor-General of Khuzestan to declare martial law in the province at his own discretion. The Governor-General declared martial law in Aghajari and the military commander arrested two local union leaders in Gachsaran, as well as the CCFTU provincial leader, Ali Omid in Ahvaz. Reacting to the news of the Aghajari strike, the AIOC management appealed to the CCFTU provincial leader Najafi to fly to Aghajari and persuade the workers to resume their work by promising the release of the arrested activists through the intervention of the government in Tehran. This appeal proved to be successful.⁹¹

87 BP Archive, ArcRef. 16249 Ivor Jones to Edward Elkington, 12 May 1946.

88 BP Archive, ArcRef. 43762. Report by Elkington, 'Tudeh Party Activities Amongst Anglo-Iranian Oil Company Labour', 25 July 1946.

89 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946.

90 BP Archive, ArcRef. 130264, Summary of Abadan General strike, 19 July 1946.

91 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946. Vezarat Kar va Tablighat 1947, p. 41.

While all indications confirmed that the CCFTU was losing its hold over the workers, the Tudeh Party leadership in Tehran still sought to eschew an overtly combative stance against the Oil Company and the Iranian government. One option that was considered saw the Tudeh Party as managing the workers' frustrations and playing a game of cat and mouse with the Oil Company, while forcing its way into the Qavam cabinet. However, with Aghajari now under martial law, Tudeh Party local activists under arrest, and the reports that the Oil Company's security officer, Colonel Underwood – together with Major Jaecock and the British Consul in Khorramshahr, Willoughby – were planning to bring armed Arab activists to Abadan to celebrate the opening of the Arab Union and attack the CCFTU and Tudeh Party's clubs on 15 July, the CCFTU and Tudeh Party found they had no other choice but to embark upon a show of strength by calling for a general strike throughout the oil industry. They hoped the general strike would not only empower them sufficiently to control the workers' frustration and sustain their hegemony over the labour movement,⁹² but also increase their political bargaining power in negotiating with the government of Iran.

Chronicle of the Strike

The general strike began at 4.45 a.m. on Sunday 14 July 1946 and encompassed all areas of the oil industry in Khuzestan – from the Abadan Refinery to the oil fields in Ahvaz, Aghajari, Masjid Suleiman, Gachsaran, Naft Safid and Haftkel – and amassed Iranian and Indian refinery and field workers; clerical and manual workers; firemen, drivers and dockworkers; and even the domestic servants and cooks employed in British households.⁹³ In Abadan the workers formed their first picket at the Main Time Office of the Abadan Refinery and as the morning progressed, they accumulated ever more pickets, including at the Jetty and the Post Office – a sign of the workers' hold not only on the oil industry, but the city as well. According to the British Council in Khorramshahr, at 8.00 a.m. the Governor-General Mesbah-Fatemi, who was in the provincial capital Ahvaz, declared martial law in the province and on the request of the Oil Company ordered pickets to be established at strategic locations in Abadan. Later, a curfew was imposed in Abadan from 22.00 to 04.00. Workers operating essential services continued their tasks and went on shifts and the CCFTU members posted as guards throughout Abadan took control of the urban transport, 'preventing damage to Company property and looting by provocateurs'.

92 Ibid. p. 31.

93 Ibid. p. 35. *Zafar*, no. 306, 15 July 1946.

The strike proceeded in an 'orderly' fashion with no incidents reported, while the declaration of martial law failed to drive the crowds from the streets. The workers distributed pamphlets, outlining strike issues and calling on 'all workers and compatriots' to attend a rally jointly organised by the Tudeh Party and the CCFTU in Ahmadabad labour district at 19.00. In the afternoon, the British Council in Khorramshahr met Vosouq, the civil Governor of Abadan, and when the Council expressed his trepidation over the events underway in the city, the Governor somewhat ambiguously assured him that there was no need to be concerned, since 'there is a certain ongoing arrangement'. The Council later confessed that he realised that 'some deep game was being played'. Later in the day, he was informed that 'there was a meeting between some Arab sheikhs and the Governor and following this meeting when the sheikhs were leaving the Governorate House, the voice of the Governor could be heard shouting on Arab sheikhs if they had their mandate!'

The minutes of the meeting between the Governor of Abadan and the Arab sheikhs were never recorded, but upon leaving the Governorate House, the sheikhs decided to abandon their earlier plan of inaugurating the Arab Union's headquarters on the following day, 15 July (the birth date of the Twelfth Imam) and instead hastily called on their supporters to convene before evening in front of the Union for the ceremonial opening of the headquarters. In their new call, there was no longer any reference to the birthday of the Twelfth Imam. By then rumours began spreading from the Governorate House that the 'Tudeh mob were marching to the Arab Union headquarters and a number of Arabs already had been killed'.⁹⁴ In the late afternoon, according to a report by the US military Attaché, 'Colonel Underwood moved his office next door to that of Military Governor of Abadan Ahmad Fateh, in order to coordinate the activities of government troops, assisted by two hundred Iraqi Arabs brought from across the border'.⁹⁵

While preparations for the CCFTU-Tudeh evening rally in Ahmadabad were underway, in another part of the city some Tudeh members departed by car and motorbike for the Arab Union headquarters, where around 200 Union members were gathered in the street. When the crowd did not permit the Tudeh members to pass, fighting broke out and a shot was fired from an undetermined source.⁹⁶

94 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946.

95 US National Archive. RG. 84/2256. Williams, 3 September 1946, cited in Ladjevardi 1985, p. 134.

96 The Proceeding of the Military Tribunal on the 24 July 1946 Abadan Incident, in Javanshir 1980, p. 57.

It took some time for the news of the shooting to reach the crowd attending the CCFTU-Tudeh rally, which began at 19.30. The rally, which saw several 'inflammatory' speeches by workers and Tudeh activists, was advancing and the crowd's ferocious roar, numbering thousands, filled the air, when at 20.30 the news of the shooting of two Tudeh members reached the rally. The news was just the spark needed to set the rally ablaze. According to the Company's intelligence report, at this stage a man by the name of Ali Pahlevan, a city wrestler, foreman and taxi driver, who was known in Abadan as a Tudeh partisan, incited the crowd by declaring:

Brothers! You should not be afraid of these Arabs even if they are armed with guns. Attack them bravely, they will be successful no doubt in killing two or three persons from us, but after all they will be killed by the mob there and then. If we let these traitors live, they will not allow our movement to develop and progress.⁹⁷

The anti-Arab wording in the Company's intelligence report needs to be taken with some degree of caution. As we will see, those who were primarily targeted were the city's known contactors, who were a mix of Arab and Persian extraction.

The crowd followed Pahlevan's call and set off for the Arab Union. According to some testimonies, at the headquarters of the Arab Union, besides the supporters of the Union, the Governor of Abadan amassed hundreds of unemployed workers, whose presence since the end of the war was visible at the corner of each main street in Abadan.⁹⁸ By the time the CCFTU-Tudeh crowd reached the Arab Union building, fighting broke out between Union guards armed with firearms and the CCFTU-Tudeh supporters armed with clubs and knives.⁹⁹ Outnumbering the Union guards, the crowd of CCFTU-Tudeh, as well as the earlier assembled unemployed workers, seized all the papers held inside the Union building before setting fire to it. Sheikh Haddad, an Arab labour contractor who happened to be in the building, was killed together with his assistant and some others, including a Persian merchant and landowner, Seyyed Mohammad Qodsi. Later, the crowd marched to the residence of Hussein Ghazi, a well-known Persian Isfahani merchant, and killed him as well.

97 Indian Office, L/PS/12/3490A. British Consulate, Khorramshahr, 21 July 1946.

98 The Proceeding of the Military Tribunal on the 24 July 1946 Abadan Incident, in Javanshir 1980, p. 60. Vezarat Kar va Tablighat 1947, p. 36.

99 US National Archive. RG. 84/2256. Williams, 3 September 1946, cited in Ladjevardi 1985, p. 134.

The crowd looted the houses of all these contractors, including the residence of Youssef Kuwaiti, a Persian Jewish contractor who was fortuitously on a business trip. Fighting spread to other parts of Abadan and rioting continued until midnight. By then the government troops had intervened and the Military Governor of Abadan gave the order to fire upon the crowds. The casualties of 14 July in the coming days reached 47 dead and 173 injured. According to the CCFTU, 10 percent of the total casualties were Arabs and 90 percent were non-Arabs.¹⁰⁰

Early in the morning of 15 July, when the reinforcement of 100 troops arrived in Abadan, the military occupied the headquarters of the Tudeh Party and CCFTU and began hunting for both party and union activists. Fateh, the Military Governor of Abadan, sent for certain CCFTU leaders, including Najafi, ostensibly for parleys. They duly arrived suspecting nothing and Fateh had the union leaders peremptorily arrested. A military court was then promptly convened to try them.

Abadan woke up on the morning of 15 July with a spectre haunting the city: the spectre of the previous night's bloody and brutal clashes, which had come as a grave shock to all its residents. While the news of the night's military reinforcements and the mass arrest of workers and Tudeh activists had been disseminated by word of mouth, the Abadanis were bewildered to hear that the British government had rushed two warships to Abadan and an Indian brigade to Basra. However, as the unfolding of the events underlined, neither the local military's aggressive performance, nor the British government's comminatory adventure, had established any obstacle to the continuation of the strike.

The strike extended for the second day throughout the province in all the AIOC's departments. In Abadan, pickets stood as they had the day before. News broadcasting from the national radio referred to an extraordinary state commission constituted under the auspices of the Prime Minister, which was currently making its way to Abadan in order to settle the crisis. At 17.00 the commission, headed by Prince Mozaffar Firouz, the Prime Minister's personal deputy, landed in Abadan.¹⁰¹ The Minister of Commerce and Industry, Aramesh, and his deputy, Saghafi, and two prominent leaders of the CCFTU and Tudeh Party, Reza Radmanesh and Hussein Jowdat, were amongst the members of the commission. Meeting at the Governorate House, the commission's first act was to order all shooting to stop and the five leaders of the Tudeh Party and the CCFTU who were in custody since the early hours of the preceding night to be released. The commission continued its meetings with all parties involved,

100 *Zafar*, no. 310, 22 July 1946.

101 For Mozaffar Firouz's personal account of visiting Abadan see: Firouz 1990, pp. 159–63.

including the CCFTU, the Tudeh Party, the Oil Company and the representatives of local government, through till early morning the following day. On the morning of 16 July, Firouz travelled to Khorramshahr, where he summoned the Arab sheikhs and warned them to refrain from any confrontation with the Oil Company workers. He then returned to Abadan and addressed a congregation of 30,000 workers, pledging to them that the government was committed to resolve workers' grievances and that he had the Company's willingness to meet the workers' demands.

Work resumed in Abadan at midday on 16 July following the commission's broadcast, which declared that a settlement had been reached between the strikers and the Oil Company. According to the statement, the workers' demand of a minimum wage of 35 Rials per day and Friday pay were settled retrospective to the date on which the Labour Law was enacted, 18 May, yet the Oil Company refused to concede any ground on the issue of pay for the three-day strike period and the removal of two Oil Company security officers, namely, Colonel Underwood and Major Jaecock. On issues such as the improvement of transportation facilities, housing, and better medical services, the Company made some promises, with no specific references. At 14.00 on 16 July the strikers returned to work.¹⁰²

The Immediate Results and the Distant Perspective of the July Strike

The sixty hour general strike in July 1946 aligned all Iranian and Indian employees of the Oil Company, workers as well as clerks, behind the calls for the tangible demands of wage increases, Friday pay, better housing and improved medical services. The Oil Company's partial compliance with these demands became a source of social capital for the Iranian labour movement and Iranian society at large, which had been less accustomed to the processes and means whereby pressure and change might be exerted from below. Despite having endured twenty-five years of authoritarian modernisation, when the agency of the labour movement in tandem with a plurality of subaltern voices was systematically prevented from initiating reform and change, the latter found themselves empowered and enlivened through the introduction of just one of the workers' demands, to wit, the demand for Friday pay. Moreover, this empowerment was primarily in evidence amongst ordinary workers as

102 BP Archive, ArcRef. 130264, Summary of Abadan General strike, 19 July 1946.



FIGURE 7.3 *Tehran, 1946. Labour demonstration in solidarity with the oil workers of Khuzestan. Photographer Dimitri Kessel. Life Magazine Archive. Free public domain.*

opposed to the labour union, the CCFTU. It is this new sense of empowerment and the capacity to affect change that would come to the fore and find itself embodied in the movement for the nationalisation of the oil industry in the years to follow.

The sixty hour general strike also aligned the workers of the oil industry behind the labour union. This alignment was a source of considerable political capital and was accordingly exploited by the CCFTU in order to pave the way for the Tudeh Party's entry into government. The final comments of Najafi, the head of the Abadan office of the CCFTU on 16 July, following the return of Firouz to Tehran, exemplified the Tudeh Party and the CCFTU's position on the development of the labour movement in the south. In a meeting of Tudeh Party and CCFTU activists in Abadan, Najafi advised the workers that arbitration of the whole affair had been referred by the CCFTU to the Iranian government and that no strike would be called in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, by referring to Firouz's visit to Abadan and his 'favoured pro-workers stance' during the intervention with the Oil Company, Najafi anticipated that in the near future the basis for further cooperation between the Tudeh Party, the CCFTU and the Qavam government would be more propitious. Though Najafi's optimism was not shared by the majority of strikers present at the meeting, he appeared to be vindicated after almost a month, when, on 1 August, three members of the Tudeh Party were invited to join Qavam's cabinet.

For the Oil Company, the sixty-hour general strike turned into a bone of contention where one could observe the clash between the Oil Company's old management and the new reformist Labour government, which had been elected into power by the British electorate in July 1945. The majority of the AIOC management were colonial-era bureaucrats with a background working in the Burmese oil industry, and others had served as military officers to the British Raj. Enjoying the political patronage of the Conservative Party in the British Houses of Parliament, they viewed the growing assertiveness of the labour movement worldwide, from the United States¹⁰³ to Latin America¹⁰⁴ and from Africa, to Europe and the Middle East, through the binaries and antagonisms of the Cold War.

The Cold War was already emerging from the ashes of WWII and refashioning the nature of international relations across the globe. For example, in an individual report compiled by William Cuthbert, a Conservative MP and member of the British Parliamentary Mission visiting Khuzestan in June 1946, the Iranians are described as 'not strong enough nor morally sound enough ever to form a really democratic government and rule their own country'. His advice to the British government was to begin the 'resumption of spheres of influence in Persia such as existed in 1907, i.e., a Russian sphere in the North and a British sphere in the South' and further added that 'the future of Persia should be discussed with Russia'.¹⁰⁵

Cuthbert's proposal was shared by Sir Orme Sargent, a veteran diplomat who represented Britain at the Versailles Conference of 1919, and in 1946 held the post of permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office. According to the record of a meeting convened by Sargent on 17 June 1946, which brought together some high-ranking members of the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Fuel and Power, the question of the maintenance of British oil supplies from Iran was discussed and the various options considered included:

- To encourage local separation in South-West Persia and develop an 'Azerbaijan' there, under British inspiration.
- Reducing the amount of the Persian government's royalties in the event of a strike.
- To attempt to split the Tudeh Party by winning over to ourselves those who, while genuinely anxious to reform, are not communists and do not really wish to follow the dictates of Moscow.

103 Beasley, forthcoming.

104 Tijerina, forthcoming.

105 The National Archive, FO 371/52718. Report of three members of the Parliament visiting south Iran, 19 June 1946.

- The use of force. It could be decided that if the Persians would not keep order we would. Once a decision to use force if necessary is taken, it should be made clear to the Persians that we intend to do so if the necessity arises. Likewise if it is intended to resist any Persian attempt to nationalise the AIOC, one of the probable dangers of the situation, it would be desirable to make it clear that, even if we were not able to exploit the oil ourselves, we have no intention of allowing anyone else to do so.
- Provision of more houses, cinemas etc. if this is really what is wanted.¹⁰⁶

Two days later, in a letter to Ernest Bevin, the Secretary of the Foreign Office in the new Labour government, Sargent further elaborated his secessionist argument by proposing that ‘measures might have to be devised for stirring up tribesmen in opposition to the Tudeh Party and in favour of local autonomy’.¹⁰⁷

Given the ease with which uncritical recourse to the topos of ‘communist provocation’ was made, many amongst the British Foreign Office’s local agents as well as Oil Company employees persistently denied, if not well-nigh sought to obfuscate, the connections between poverty, the manifold problems brought about by the absence of basic welfare provision and the grievances voiced by workers as they overflowed the streets in the southwest of the country. For the Oil Company’s Security Officer, Colonel Underwood, the strike was nothing but a ‘political plot engineered by the pro-Russian Tudeh Party and other elements’, who infiltrated into the labour ranks. Because of such a Manichean view, the only solution he was able to propose was one which he believed would wrap up the issue of labour unrest once and for all. In his own words, ‘a friendly atmosphere between the Company and its labour cannot be expected, unless the present Tudeh leaders are removed for good, dead or alive’.¹⁰⁸ This was a mission Colonel Underwood had set himself in the days prior to the bloody evening of 14 July by instigating ethnic conflict in Abadan and rousing elements of the Arab community against the striking workers. The declaration of martial law, which followed and remained in place for years to come, resulting in the mass arrest of Tudeh Party and CCFTU activists, was an inevitable outcome, foreseen by Underwood.¹⁰⁹ According to Elwell-Sutton, during the weeks running up to the general strike ‘it was common talk amongst the supporters of the left that Britain was encouraging separatist movements amongst Arabs’. Following the

106 The National Archive, FO 371/52715. Records of the meeting held by Sir O. Sargent. 18 June 1946.

107 The National Archive, FO 371/52715. ‘Persian Situation’, Sargent to Bevin. 20 June 1946.

108 BP Archive, ArcRef. 130264, Summary of Abadan General strike, 19 July 1946.

109 *Zafar*, no. 314, 26 July 1946.

strike, the British government and the AIOC were charged with having 'deliberately fomented the strike and clash between Persians and Arabs to provide an incentive for British intervention'. Elwell-Sutton testifies that 'without going as far as that, it certainly does appear that Company officials had been indiscreet in encouraging "Arab" activities in the area'.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, with the landslide victory of the Labour Party in the July 1945 British parliamentary elections, there was pressure on the AIOC to adopt some reforms vis-à-vis its general policy in Iran. Confronted with reports pouring in from the AIOC and various departments within the British political establishment pertaining to political developments inside Iran in general and the recent labour unrest in Khuzestan in particular,¹¹¹ the new Labour government became increasingly concerned about the AIOC's pursuit of an independent political agenda with respect to the Iranian oil industry, which diverged from the British government's general policy towards Iran. Reacting to Sargent's 'Persian Situation' report, Ernest Bevin summarised the government's concerns in the following words:

Your paper leaves out the account of the history of this business and the action of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in their dealing with labour in the past. The first point I would like to make is that there was a law in Persia which prohibited workpeople from joining a trade union, and that law, I understand, was carried at the request of the oil companies, for, be it remembered, it was only at the outbreak of this last war that the oil companies in England were willing to recognise a union for their transport people and that had to be forced through the Control Board. This background of anti-trade union organization by the companies has inevitably brought the present situation to a head.

...

It is quite clear from your paper that you have not studied the Tudeh Party's programme and I called attention the other day to moderation of the programme in most of its items, which in any ordinary industry would be adopted. I recognise therefore that there is a fertile field here for reform, and it is no more fertile than in England some years ago when the mass of general labour organised itself. In my view, the way to tackle this problem is vigorous application by the Company of their social programme and greater consultation with their workpeople, and the building up within the undertaking itself of human relationships with

110 Elwell-Sutton 1955, pp. 146–7.

111 The National Archive, FO 248/1471, Military Intelligence Report, 19 July 1946.

the actual men, not on a feudal basis but with the appreciation that all over the world the sense of equality is rapidly developing.

...

You speak of stopping the royalties in the case of a strike. Would it not be better to work out some different method of sharing with Persian Government instead of merely paying royalties? They will be able to point to us and say we are nationalising our resources, why should we deny the same to them?

...

A propaganda campaign might at once be started in Persia on anti-Communist lines, emphasising the need for reform, but supporting Persian nationalism and Persian independence and opposing political parties which take their inspiration and their money from foreign sources.¹¹²

Bevin's reconciliatory and reformist posture was indeed a reflection of the broad political mandate of Clement Attlee's Labour government (1945–51), which enacted a host of radical economic and political policies both inside and outside Britain during its term of office. Although the Labour government's policy towards the Iranian oil industry drastically altered when the question of its nationalisation emerged in the late 1940s, the Labour government during its tenure initiated the gradual dismantlement of some of the more troubling aspects of the British Empire and the nationalisation of major industries alongside the establishment of a welfare system 'from the cradle to the grave'.

The clash within the heart of the British political establishment over how to manage and draw up policies for the mass of working people in the aftermath of WWII was rapidly being brought to a head with the onset of a new phase in the global labour movement. This period was shaped by the decisive impact of workers' willingness to strike, from Africa to Europe and Asia to America, in non-colonial and colonial settings, as well as hybrid ones, like that of Iran, where forms of colonialism were practised indirectly, while formally acknowledging Iranian sovereignty.

In the British colonial universe, the question was whether colonial administrators could foresee, control and manage the mounting political and social grievances exacerbated in the course of the two world wars and twenty years of interbellum. In the post-WWII era, the British Empire was in desperate need of an expeditious recovery from its growing economic travails, including the immense debt owed to the United States. It was reckoned that one of the best

112 The National Archive, FO 371/52715. Bevin to Sargent. 23 June 1946.

available routes for remedying these financial woes was the establishment of a better shelter for hard currency in the world market through the sale of oil – amongst other raw materials – from overseas colonies, or the export of domestically produced commodities. The administrators of the British Empire were not willing to countenance any possible disruption to their envisaged plans to guarantee the Empire's preponderance long into the future, least of all from the labour movement demanding better working conditions and standards of living.

If, during the war, when confronting striking workers and the potential threat they posed to colonial rule, the resort to coercive and divisive measures was commonplace, then by contrast, in the post-war era and the further escalation and growth of the movement, the need to adopt novel complementary measures was felt at both home and overseas. The pressing need for reform came from the colonial periphery. In Africa, as noted by Frederick Cooper, 'Great Britain's colonial labour policy was to a large extent pulled along from the periphery, as local officials had to come to grips with the challenges posed by workers'.¹¹³ It was under the Labour government that the dichotomy of increased output and increased welfare amalgamated into the new conceptions of 'development'. As professed by Ernest Bevin, 'We must be careful that our plans for the development of our Colonial Dependencies cannot in any way be represented as springing solely from our selfish interests. It is above all important that in their presentation there is no possible suggestion of exploitation of the colonial population'.¹¹⁴ The key elements of Bevin's argument ran through the gamut of the aforementioned correspondence with the AIOC and the immediate reactions to the July strike. During the following months and years, however, the politics of the 'Cold War', coming quickly off the heels of WWII, would essentially marginalise, if not wholly elide, the hopes which had been harboured within the promises of development.

The May–July 1946 labour movement in the Iranian oil industry, the largest industrial stoppage in Iranian history and the region hitherto, reached its denouement with the sixty-hour general strike and dark, bloody night in Abadan. It had momentous results for all the actors involved both in the short and longer term. Although the workers' protest was imposed upon the CCFTU and the Tudeh Party, the general strike nevertheless enabled the Tudeh Party to parlay its way into the Qavam cabinet off the back of the labour movement. Moreover, due to the Oil Company's provocative mishandling of the workers'

113 Cooper 1996, p. 202.

114 Ibid., p. 205.

protests, the strike found itself rapidly transformed into a conflagration, which was met with the violence of martial law in turn. The opportunity was then seized for the imprisonment and exile of the most prominent labour activists, with the ultimate objective being that of uprooting and destroying the entire union and workers' network in the province.

The tightly integrated nature of the Tudeh Party and the CCFTU, which in the oil industry made the differentiation of their activities impossible, increased the vulnerability of the labour movement. The CCFTU ultimately transformed into a function of the Tudeh Party. It was forced to live and operate in accordance with the vicissitudes of the party's fortunes and as a consequence met with a premature demise.

It was thus that this strike foretold was turned into a pretext by the Oil Company to destroy organised labour and the political activism of the Tudeh Party in Khuzestan once and for all. The violence unleashed on that fateful day was an opportunity to be seized by the Company, thereby ensuring the arrival of martial law to Abadan. While the leadership of the CCFTU-Tudeh Party had foreseen the potentially devastating repercussions of a head-on collision with the AIOC, there was little they could do to resist the gravitational forces seemingly pulling them into the rapidly approaching maelstrom. Subsequently, they tried to opportunistically shape and exploit the strike as much as possible for their own political gain and in keeping with their own political agenda and priorities. The Oil Company coordinated the use of violence with more conciliatory measures, such as accepting most of the oil workers' demands and pledges to improve the state of housing and healthcare in the years to follow. But it had temporarily succeeded in its endgame of destroying the organisational basis of the CCFTU and Tudeh's power, as martial law would remain in place for several years to come. While the workers appeared to have been defeated by the brutal clampdown in the immediate term, they would in due course reap some of the dividends of this struggle and set a precedent, which would prove difficult to reverse. Moreover, the composure and complacency of the Oil Company would in the succeeding decade find itself disturbed on an unprecedented scale with the historic movement for oil nationalisation, which once again brought the AIOC, the Iranian government and Iranian oil workers into the international spotlight.

Petitioning as Industrial Bargaining in a Turkish State Factory: The Changing Nature of Petitioning in Early Republican Turkey*

Görkem Akgöz

Introduction

On 18 November 1945, after attending a crowded ceremony for the opening of a factory hospital and dining room at Bakırköy Cloth Factory, a reporter delivered the following comments:

The state, in its own factories, thinks about the health and well-being of its workers and clerks, [it] thinks about their food, [it] thinks about their social civility, [it] thinks about their recreation. In one word, [it] provides them with the necessities of a civilised life. As such, the state also precludes the class war, which turned the Western world upside down because instead of the idea of exploiting the workers and the clerks, the mentality of providing a more prosperous life for them reigns. The worker finds a heaven at the factory, not hell, and commits to it.¹

Although it is impossible to know whether Mümin was among those attending the ceremony, it is certain that he did not share the enthusiasm of the reporter. A careful study of his personnel file shows that what he found at the factory was far from heaven. He described his situation in July 1946 as follows:

The following is my wish. [Your] servant Mümin Kılıç, nine years in the yarn department and nine months in the maintenance department as assistant foreman has been working at the factory for nine years and

* This article is based on material collected while working on a PhD dissertation at the University of Amsterdam. I wish to thank the staff of the International Institute of Social History for assistance. The assistance and advice of Marcel van der Linden in the preparation of this manuscript is also gratefully acknowledged.

1 'Bakırköy Fabrikasında', *Cumhuriyet* (19 November 1945).

nine months. Although I have been working for such a [long] time, I have received only five piastres increase. I am a member of a family of four, since the money I am receiving does not allow making do my ... [unreadable, GA] family agonise in exigency. My counterparts, as well as the apprentices that I teach, receive fifty piastres. Because of the high cost of living, I respectfully ask from your high office to be given wages like those of my friends, taking into consideration that I have been working for this many years without intervals to receive a raise in order not to be excessively aggrieved.²

Petitions like this one seem to be fragments from an industrial world that is quite different from that of the reporters and the state officers. There are very few sources available to historians which allow us to hear the voices of the early Republican workers in Turkey. Although systematic research into the state archives is not possible as of yet, an analysis of the petitions written by Bakırköy workers in the 1940s provides an opportunity to hear their voices. In addition to offering opportunities to identify and study the economic and social conditions in which they lived and worked, as a major mechanism for grievance redressal, these petitions also offer much material with which to reflect upon the changes in the subjective elements of working-class language and politics.

Mümin's petition is one of those written by Bakırköy workers in my sample to plea for a wage increase between 1942 and 1951.³ While the newspapers were celebrating the improvements in the conditions of the state workers, the Bakırköy workers were writing more and more petitions to explain their hardening conditions. As they are not dependent on a politically motivated reporter's words, workers' petitions voice rank-and-file workers' experiences and worldviews by documenting their life on the shop floor as well as their visions of a just world of industrial relations.

The following analysis presents a micro-historical case study of the petitions written by the workers in a state factory in early Republican Turkey. Petitions

2 I leave the grammatical and lexical language mistakes in the petitions untouched since they could be regarded as indications of literacy among the workers.

3 For my study on the history of a state-owned textile factory in Istanbul between 1932 and 1950, I was given only a small period of access to factory archives. Although there is a sizeable archive of factory files from the period, they are not officially open to researchers. The conditions of work at the archives and the unsystematic inventories of the files did not allow me to see more files. Although my short experience with these files gave me the impression that there is a considerable number of such petitions awaiting to be seen by researchers, there is no reason for labour historians of Turkey to be hopeful about them in the near future.

have been accepted as a peculiarly rich kind of documentary source.⁴ More than a reflection of social relationships, they play a role in the constitution of the multiple ways in which a government and its subjects perceive and relate to each other. A sequential analysis of petitions, especially when it includes a period of dynamic political and social change, could illustrate the changes not only in the objective working and living conditions of the petitioners, but could also document the changes in the subjective construction of their worldviews and the ways in which they express them.

In a context characterised by the absence of trade unions and an effective and independent arbitration system, petitioning was still the predominant form of labour negotiation and industrial bargaining. In the absence of historical material left by the workers, workers' petitions could 'illuminate many aspects of reality hardly documented in other (state) sources'.⁵ To begin with, the development of labour conditions and the changing dynamics of labour relations can be followed through consecutive petitions. This is especially important since no significant study of industrial relations in factories for this era exists as yet. Thus, a close reading of the workers' petitions and the scribbled commentaries of the management on these petitions is a good starting point for understanding the dynamics of worker-management relations in state factories during the early Republican period.

Petitions could also be used to reconstruct the worldview of rank-and-file workers, the verbalisation of their aspirations and the ideological categories with which they interpreted their own experience and formulated their goals. Although at times petition appeals appear to be formulaic, 'within such expressions a complexity of situations and attitudes can be discerned'.⁶ By means of discerning the changes in these petitions over time, I aim to show that the workers' self-perceptions and the representations of that self-perception underwent a dramatic change during the early Republican period. The stories of Bakırköy workers demonstrate that, while they tried to cope with worsening working and living conditions, they also devised strategies to resist the management's

4 The importance of petitions as archival documents for social history has been demonstrated in a special volume of the *International Review of Social History*. Ranging from a wide array of contexts from early modern Italy to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century colonial India and nineteenth-century British Royal Dockyards, the contributions in this volume illustrate the multiple ways in which the use of petitions enrich the study of the experiences of subaltern subjects. 'Petitions in Social History', *International Review of Social History* (2001) 46 (Supplement 9).

5 Würgler 2001, p. 32.

6 Lunn and Day 2001, p. 139.

attempts to increase control both inside and outside the factory. Contrary to the prevailing arguments in the literature on workers of the period, class-consciousness was growing and resistance was building up, slowly but firmly, in the post-War years. The biographical approach proposed here opens up a different perspective on the development of working-class consciousness in early Republican Turkey by bringing individual lives together with the dynamics of political and social change.

The two axes of analysis, namely the changes in labour relations and the reconstruction of the worldviews of rank-and-file workers, could be carried out simultaneously by means of treating workers' petitions as representations of 'actions in structured situations'.⁷ Doing so requires a few words on the structured situations in which Bakırköy workers found themselves. It was the state's role as employer which characterised the context of work at the Bakırköy Factory. This influenced the shaping of employment strategies and gave the employment relationship a unique character. The petitions express a particular set of meanings as claims against the state, which was the direct employer. Written by the state workers of a newly founded Republic, these petitions also have the quality of presenting the multiple ways in which the citizen worker communicated with a state under single-party rule until 1945. In contrast to a private factory where a profit-making ethos would overrule, a state factory was a thoroughly and openly politicised space where workers were expected to toil for the benefit of a developmentalist regime. As such, these petitions were active engagements with the experience of working at a state factory where the politics of production and the production of politics were closely intertwined in early Republican Turkey. I would argue that their analysis would present some of the forms and modes of communication between state workers and the institutions of the state and would allow us to reconstruct the procedures of mediation, repression, acceptance and resistance that operated on the level of the shop floor. The changes in the forms of deference and defiance undertaken by Bakırköy workers would hint at the ways in which the changing political context influenced working-class consciousness and its verbal expressions.

The analysis of Bakırköy workers' petitions in this chapter begins with an account of the political context of industrial proletarianisation in the young Turkish Republic. It then turns to the chronological analysis of individual petitions and explores them as material that connects the politics of the shop floor to the wider politics of state. The extended histories of single workers

7 Lipp and Krempel 2001, p. 153.

through petitions they wrote act as a means of exploring broader historical developments pertaining to political and economic changes on the one hand, and changes in working-class language on the other. Five aspects of these petitions are studied here: timing, frequency, addressee, content and vocabulary. Weaving together biographical snapshots of workers' experiences of industrial work with the wider processes of political development, the chapter concludes with an assessment of the changes in workers' language throughout the 1940s.

The Context of Industrial Proletarianisation in Early Republican Turkey

Reflected in the words of the reporter quoted above was an apparently shared opinion on state-labour relations in early Republican Turkey. After a decade of *laissez-faire* economic policy in the 1920s, the dependence of the Turkish economy on grain exports resulted in the young Republican state taking the task of industrialisation upon itself. State-led industrialisation took off in the beginning of the 1930s as a result and numerous state factories emerged in the 1930s and 40s; some were newly constructed, others were taken over from older administrative bodies by Sümerbank, the holding that was established in order to run state factories, including the Bakırköy Factory. The number of employees in state industrial enterprises reached 70,455 in 1938 and increased to 146,902 in 1948.⁸ Sümerbank employed 20,000 workers in 1940, 22,000 in 1945 and 30,050 in 1950.⁹ This macroscopic development had a peculiar characteristic pertaining to the atypical conjoining of economic and political temporalities. The process of the formation of an industrial proletariat in Turkey was simultaneous with the emergence of a new state form in which the ruling party and the state converged.

Besides the change in the economic policy, the 1930s also witnessed the emergence of a new state form characterised by the identification of the Republican People's Party with the state apparatus. After this full congruency

8 Makal 2002, p. 38.

9 'Sümerbank İçtimai Teşkilat Raporu', in Sümerbank 1940 senesi faaliyet ve hesap devresine ait İdare Meclisi raporu, bilanço, kar ve zarar hesabı, (Ankara: TBMM Matbaası, 1941), p. 1; Sümerbank 1946 senesi faaliyet ve hesap devresine ait İdare Meclisi raporu, bilanço, kar ve zarar hesabı, (İstanbul: n.p., 1947), p. 1; Başbakanlık Umumi Murakebe Heyeti tarafından 3460 Sayılı Kanunun 24. Maddesi gereğince Hazırlanan Sümerbank 1950 Yılı Raporu, (Ankara: n.p., 1951), p. 1.

between state administration and party organisation was declared, increasing suppression of civil rights and societal autonomy followed,¹⁰ which also included the heavy oppression of the working class and the denial of the existence of the social classes in the populist Kemalist regime. All these political and economic changes were achieved with the aid of an ideology of nationalism. The process of proletarianisation occurred in the context of the emergence of a new politics of nation and citizenship. The interactions between these two processes, I argue, had a significant effect on working-class political and cultural behaviour.

On the factory level, the simultaneity of these two processes resulted in a specific factory regime. Michael Burawoy defines the institutional relationship between the apparatuses of the factory and state as one of the factors that determine a factory regime and explains the significance of that relationship by comparing the South Chicago division of a multinational corporation, Allied – where he worked as a machine operator in 1974 – and the Red Star Tractor Factory in Budapest, where Miklós Haraszti worked as a mill operator in 1971 and which he wrote about in his seminal book *A Worker in a Worker's State*:

At Allied, the factory apparatuses and state apparatuses were institutionally separated; at Red Star they were fused. To be sure, the state intervened to shape the form of factory apparatuses at Allied, but it was not physically present at the point of production. At Red Star, management, party and trade union were arms of the state at the point of production.¹¹

Important differences from a communist economic planning context notwithstanding, the context of work at Bakırköy Factory presents important similarities described here. Discourses on the social and economic functions of state factories presented them as national economic enterprises, the function of which was defined as serving the creation of a national economy. In other words, the state factories were a part of the Turkish state's efforts to complement its recently acquired political independence with economic sovereignty. They did not operate under stringent profit constraints; and their workers were expected to patriotically relate to their labour. Discourses around their existence exhibited various expressions of nationalism ranging from the comparison of factory work with military service to describing a work-stoppage

10 Birtek 1985, p. 407, Keyder 1979, p. 14.

11 Burawoy 1985, p. 12; Haraszti 1977.

attempt as an act of betrayal to the homeland. The emergence of the language of class at that national factory was shaped by these references, which were also partially internalised by Bakırköy workers.

Labour historians have analysed the influence of the political context in which proletarianisation occurred on working-class consciousness and its verbalisation. In his seminal work on the English working class, E.P. Thompson argued that the political context had as much influence as the steam engine in shaping working-class consciousness and institutions.¹² Looking at the ways in which capitalist relations hindered the development of political democracy, David Montgomery noted the opportunities opened by an analysis of working-class experiences in the context of a simultaneous evolution of political democracy and capitalist economy in order to assess the advantages political democracy provided for workers.¹³ Until very recently, in Turkish labour historiography working-class consciousness and labour politics have been explained in terms of the particular historical and institutional characteristics of the system of industrial relations.

Such studies document the debilitating effects of the strong state tradition, the repressive political mechanism created by the single party regime, the ban on trade unions and the close links between unions and the ruling parties in the development of an independent labour movement. Adopting a top-down approach to the study of labour history, these analyses approached history from the point of view of the state and the elites and treated their actions as the main driving force of history. The workers' own voices get lost in such a paradigm.¹⁴ Through a close reading of Bakırköy workers' petitions, this chapter attempts to hint at the possibilities of the approach of history from below for the study of the dynamic period of change in 1940s Turkey.

12 Thompson 1991, p. 216.

13 Montgomery 1993, pp. 2–3.

14 For a discussion of this paradigm and its historiographical implications see Quataert 1996; Lockman 1994; Akin 2005. The younger generation of labour historians in Turkey have paid attention to the ways workers experienced the later Ottoman and early Republican waves of industrialisation. An important contribution to Turkish labour historiography is a special issue on Ottoman and Turkish labour history by the *International Review of Social History* (2009), especially the articles by Balsoy, Nacar and Akin.

The Paradoxical Labour Market

The earliest petitions analysed in this chapter date from January 1943:

To the Higher Office of General Directorate of Sümerbank,
My esteemed sir,
The destitute had been working at the Bakırköy Cloth Factory for seven years and I have dared to take refuge in your Higher Office as a worker who had always gained the countenance of his superiors all the time during this period. The situation is that many of my friends benefited from the increases in every aspect. The destitute, however, is deprived. I am in extreme poverty. Especially the latest increase in the cost of living has suffocated me. I kindly ask you with my eternal respect to give your order and permission to those concerned for an increase in my wage in the suitable amount also to the destitute in order not to cause my damnification.

The petitioner, Mehmet, worked in the dyeing department of the factory from 1936 until he was enlisted for the army in February 1941. This was an exceptionally long period of employment at a state factory where the labour turnover rate was high and desertion was common. Immediately after his demobilisation in January 1942, he returned to the factory. In order to fight the high labour turnover rates, the time state workers spent at military duty was added to their seniority if they returned to their workplaces within a short time period after their demobilisation. For Mehmet, however, this was not the case, as we learn from his petition dated 29 January 1942:

The following is my wish. [Your] servant is one of your workers who worked for five years. Eleven months ago, I went to the military to carry out my national duty and have been demobilised. I beg with respect for the sake of humanity that your servant with wife and children is re-employed so that I am not aggrieved on this winter day and saved from extreme poverty.

From a short note below Mehmet's petition, we learn that there was no position available at the time and thus he had to wait. That an experienced worker such as Mehmet had difficulty in returning to a state factory while the state tried to keep the labour turnover rate under control requires further elaboration on the structure of the labour market during the period. The labour market of the early Republican period displays a paradoxical character in that, while workers such

as Mehmet had to beg for work, factories and workshops were continuously looking for new workers. For example, in the same year as Mehmet wrote the above petition, Bakırköy Factory was publishing job advertisements. In one of these advertisements, the factory claims that a hardworking weaver could earn up to 700 piastres a day with the additional benefits of one meal, a loaf of bread free of charge and food and other products at their cost of production. Those who regularly come to work, it adds, would receive an additional 10 percent every month.¹⁵

Another newspaper reports that the extensions in the Bakırköy factory required the recruitment of new workers, especially weavers, but despite the increase in the wages and benefits, it was still very hard to find experienced workers.¹⁶ It is hard to believe that a few months earlier, the same newspaper published ads by weavers, claiming to be experienced and skilled, looking for employment at factories¹⁷ or that the Employment and Salvation Hall of one of the Republican People's Party People's Houses in Istanbul was receiving applications from people with secondary and even high school diplomas seeking employment as a worker at a state factory.¹⁸

The explanation of this paradoxical situation is twofold. First, the lack of co-ordination in the national labour market gave way to the contradictory co-existence of labourers moving around the country in search of employment, on the one hand, and factories in search of labour, on the other. Second, the ensuing problems of high labour turnover rates, and the lack of vocational training, created a labour market in which experienced and skilled workers were scarce, while unskilled workers were in abundance. Within this context of incongruence between supply of and demand for labour, Mehmet had to beg to return to the factory at a wage level of 15 piastres an hour in 1942. This figure is considerably lower than the one Makal gives as the average daily wage of a textile worker at a state factory in Istanbul in 1942.¹⁹ Although he received an increase of 3 piastres in November 1942, Mehmet's situation in January 1943 was still grave, as the wording of his first petition I quoted above illustrates. In fact, the striking similarity between the descriptions in the two petitions suggests that one year of employment did not change much for Mehmet and his family.

15 'Dokuma İşçisi Aranıyor' *Cumhuriyet* (27 September 1943).

16 'İşçi Buhranı: Tecrübeli Dokumacı Aranıyor', *Haber Akşam Postası* (28 September 1943).

17 'İş ve İşçi Arayanlar', *Haber Akşam Postası* (29 Mar. 1943); *Haber Akşam Postası* (12 April 1943).

18 'İş Bulma Yurdu: İş İçin Yurda Yüzlerce Genç Müracaat Etti', *Cumhuriyet* (26 May 1942).

19 Makal 2007, p. 132.

Mehmet gives three reasons as to why he is entitled to a wage increase in 1943. First, he mentions that he had been working at the factory for seven years at the time. He was aware that this was an exceptionally long time of employment. In fact, in 1945, the technician of his department stated that he was a 'very old' and 'hardworking' worker. It is thus safe to assume that Mehmet was a relatively experienced and skilled worker. Second, immediately after the implication of seniority comes a reference to the appraisal of the supervisors. Together, these two factors encouraged Mehmet 'to take refuge in Your Higher Office'. A certain practice should be noted here concerning the regulation of wage levels at Bakırköy. As far as the files indicate, wage increases at Bakırköy were supposed to be given every six months, but only if the approval of the supervisors was secured. By referring to his seniority and the approval of his superiors, Mehmet makes it clear that he knew the rules of the game. He was aware of his qualities as a worker and emphasised them in order to convince the management. Third, while many of his friends had received a wage increase, Mehmet continued, he was left behind. He does not specify whether these friends were from the same department as him, but we can use two other workers' data to assess the validity of Mehmet's claims. The first worker had also been working in the dyeing department since 1935 – barely a year earlier than Mehmet had started at the factory – and earned 30 piastres in August 1943 as an assistant foreman.

The second worker, a weaver who had already worked at the factory since 1928, earned 25 piastres an hour in March 1943, but his wage was increased to 30 piastres after he petitioned. Mehmet's hourly wage in January 1943, however, was only 18 piastres an hour. Thus, Mehmet's situation highlights the considerable wage differences between workers in the same department on the one hand, and workers in different departments of the factory, on the other. As the experience and seniority levels of these three workers illustrate, the wage differences were determined rather randomly.

Mehmet describes his poverty using powerful terms such as 'deprivation', 'damnification' and 'suffocation'. He cites the latest increase in the cost of living as the final blow. Indeed, the dramatic increase, especially in the price of food in early 1942, was a common topic covered by the newspapers with references to discussions on the necessity of the state distributing food supplies. Under these conditions, given that the weaver quoted above claimed not to be able to make a living on 25 piastres an hour, Mehmet's financial situation must have indeed been extremely difficult.

The Language of Deference: The Worker as the 'Destitute'

It is the language of Mehmet's petitions that strikes the reader first and is so revealing about the contrast we have seen at the beginning of this chapter. The deferential language Mehmet used in these petitions represented the most basic aspect of petitioning at Bakırköy, the appeal for 'a little more wages'. The use of such language made the petitioners more akin to a subject addressing a sovereign than a worker who had rights and was part of an industrial enterprise. As Lunn and Day noted on the petitions of British Royal Dockyard workers in the early nineteenth century, this appeal was 'couched in terms which indicated the crucial economic necessity for an increase and not one which was in any way assertive of the skill and bargaining power of militant workers'.²⁰ Indeed, the Turkish word '*acizleri*' denotes an impotent and powerless person and was often used as a sign of modesty to flatter figures of authority. The echoes of older idioms of monarchical and bureaucratic power in the petitions could be regarded as the relics of an Ottoman imperial past as they symbolised the hierarchical relations of subject and monarch or his representatives. This interpretation, however, would result in an oversight in the social function of such a language. In a politically repressive context where economic grievances could not be collectively voiced and acted upon, it is not surprising that such individual acts of industrial bargaining deployed a seemingly apolitical and therefore less challenging language in their quest for a direct relationship with the authorities. The implication of a protective ruler who would intervene in the betterment of the living conditions of its subjects was used in more open terms in other petitions discussed below. The striking point is the rather dramatic change from deference to defiance in the language of the petitions and the infusion of this language with a new sense of self in a relatively short span of time.

The use of the word 'destitute' in Mehmet's petitions refers first and foremost to material deprivation: 'The destitute, however, is deprived. I am in extreme poverty'. In the opening sentence of the petition, we can say that there is a reference to modesty to flatter figures of authority since he chose to refer to himself not immediately in the first person singular pronoun but as 'the destitute' and thus makes his agency less pronounced. He switches to 'I', however, in the second half of the sentence where he tries to legitimise his act of petitioning, which he describes as 'daring to take refuge in'.

20 Lunn and Day 2001, p. 137.

The addressee of this petition was not the factory management but the General Directorate of Sümerbank. Whether Mehmet had made other attempts, written or verbal, at the level of factory management before writing to Sümerbank is unknown. He might have found the management unfair for not giving him the same increase that others received and thought it would be more efficient to appeal to a higher authority. It was noted in his previous petition, dated 29 January 1942, that he made an oral application and that he was told to wait until there was a position available. However, it was only after his petition that he was recruited again. Could it be the case that he thought of writing to the higher offices as a strategically better option? Why did he skip the factory management before appealing to the busy headquarters of Sümerbank in Ankara to get an increase from his factory in Istanbul? Was it a practical choice or did he think of the General Directorate as a protective sovereign that would act as an attentive overseer?

From the reply of Bakırköy Factory to the Directorate of Sümerbank Yarn and Weaving Factories Enterprise, we understand that there was official correspondence between the factory and the General Directorate of Sümerbank concerning Mehmet's petition. Unfortunately, Mehmet's file does not include the petition written by Sümerbank. Yet we know that more than a month after Mehmet wrote the petition, the factory management informed the General Directorate that it was not possible to increase his wage because it had not been six months since he had received an increase. This did not prevent Mehmet from writing a second petition, this time directly to the factory management, asking for a wage increase, and again referring to the argument that he could not live on the wage he earned. The petition is dated 20 March 1943, and he received an increase of 2 piastres eleven days later, exactly six months after his last increase. The whole story suggests that the factory management was very much immune to such petitions written in a pleading tone and that it strictly followed the rules of wage increases. But how did it respond to petitions asking either for an increase or the termination of employment?

The Disposable Worker

When Süleyman started in the dyeing department in December 1943, his hourly wage was 18 piastres an hour.²¹ Only three months later, he wrote a petition to

21 Note that, although he was a new worker, Süleyman earned the same wage as Mehmet in

the chief of the department asking for the termination of his employment due to increasing financial difficulties caused by the rising cost of living. He was recently recruited and was probably not skilled, as we will see later. When he started at Bakırköy, he had a one-year-old daughter, but this did not stop him risking unemployment. The foreman's comments under his petition made it clear that Süleyman was one of these disposable workers: 'There is no inconvenience about his immediate leave'. Thus, Süleyman left the factory. Judging from his return to Bakırköy three years later to work as a construction worker for an hourly wage which was less than what he had earned in 1943, one can only assume that it was not easy for him to find stable employment elsewhere. Lacking any institutionalised social protection or assistance from any sort of workers' organisation, Süleyman was left alone in a highly unstable labour market. Five months after being recruited for the second time, he left the factory again – this time claiming that he had to go to his village for the harvest.

The argument that their rural ties protected the industrial workers against the harsh conditions of proletarianisation has been widely claimed by labour historians studying various labour contexts. Taken as a sign of the incompleteness of the process of proletarianisation, these ties were also referred to as one of the factors that hindered the development of class consciousness. This argument not only reduces class consciousness to a mere effect of objective conditions and thus ignores its subjective construction, it also prevents us from studying the real motivations that lie behind workers' actions. For example, if we follow Süleyman's experience at the factory further, we find out that he returned to the factory three years later in 1949. Apparently, it took him more than three harvests to come back to the 'workers' heaven', as the reporter quoted above put it.

I have shown above that the demand for weavers was high in textile factories. The question is whether this brought a change in the management's attitude towards weavers' complaints. Cemil, who had worked at Bakırköy as an apprentice weaver for very short periods of time in 1941 and in 1945, was recruited into the yarn department in March 1947. In 1941, his employment was terminated because of absenteeism; only three months after he was recruited. In 1945, after five months of employment, he resigned, saying that he had to go to his hometown for family reasons. When he returned in July 1947, however, he submitted an official letter stating that he had been working at a private glassware factory. In March 1947, he returned but was not recruited as a weaver this

1943, which suggests that the factory management did not strictly follow the rules of wage increases and promotions. I will return to this topic in the following pages.

time, which meant that his wage was lower than before. After four months, he wrote that he was 'obliged to resign since I cannot make a living for my family with the wage that I am earning'. The foreman's note was brief and concise: 'Since a replacement has been found, he may leave today'. We do not know what Cemil did between July 1947 and September 1948 when he returned once more to work as an apprentice weaver for 25 piastres an hour. He was thirty years old, married with no children, which probably made it easier for him to leave his job so often. He was now living in a *gecekondu* in Zeytinburnu, close to the factory, where he remained until his retirement in 1972.

Petitions in the Context of Changing State-Labour Relations after WWII

Between Süleyman's petition in 1944 and Cemil's petition in 1947, substantial changes occurred in the regime's approach towards the labour question. A number of new institutions were established, including the Ministry of Labour; the enactment of laws and regulations concerning labour relations followed each other.²² These were striking changes since until that point the Republican People's Party had exemplified Göran Therborn's definition of repression as a form of mediation of the exploitation and domination of the ruling class over the ruled classes.²³ Prohibition of opposition was exemplified by the proscription of unions, while the restriction of intra-systemic opposition assumed the form of limitations on the right to strike, harassment and terror, and surveillance. Until 10 June 1946, the establishment of organisations based on the principle of class was illegal.²⁴ The 1936 Labour Law had already outlawed strikes.

Within the international context of the post-War era, however, containing and controlling the labour force through mere repression was no longer possible. As part of its efforts to become a member of the post-war international community, the Turkish state needed to handle the labour question in more hegemonic terms. Increasing state intervention into labour relations during

22 The new policies toward labour in this period have been widely studied in Turkish labour history; these studies, however, also used a top-down approach and mainly focused on state actions in the analysis of changing labour regulations: Güngör 1994, Koç 2000, Makal 2007.

23 Therborn 1978, p. 181.

24 Kurthan Fişek notes that, through the changes in the penal code eight days after this date, the right to organise was stillborn (Fişek 1969, p. 82).

this period should be understood in this context. The establishment of the Ministry of Labour in 1945 and the 'Employment and Employee Bureau' in 1946, as well as the enactment of social insurance laws for industrial workers, increased the state's capacity in regulating the labour market and the social conditions of work. The 1936 Labour Law was also amended in this period. On 14 January 1946, the Minister of Labour was referring to the International Labour Conference in Philadelphia in 1944 as one of the motivations for this amendment.²⁵ Of the four main principles that made the Declaration of Philadelphia, the Minister was referring only to the first one, which states that labour cannot be regarded as a commodity. He omitted the second, as well as the third and the fourth principles, which defined freedom of expression and association as essential to sustained progress.²⁶ On other occasions, he mentioned the similarities between the social policy measures in Turkey and the Beveridge Plan in England. All these references to the Western world signalled a shift in the way state-society relations were organised.

There were substantial changes in the arena of national politics as well. The RPP now had to deal with the increasing opposition to its authoritarian rule. The success of the recently founded Democrat Party in the 1946 general elections revealed the discontent with the single-party regime, which manifested itself in the form of an alliance between different classes voting for the opposition. The right to organise trade unions and to strike were increasingly pronounced in political debates. In the words of a prominent sociologist of the day, who also worked as a consultant for the Ministry of Labour, the enactment of social insurance schemes was a necessity brought about by the changes in the political atmosphere:

The worker of our time does not want a favour, he wants his right. Without giving him a chance to ask for this right through mediation (or in a peaceful manner) or by means of strikes, we should provide it intrepidly [...] That is why the idea of social insurance [...] set the Turkish lawmaker into action.²⁷

As this statement illustrates, the Turkish state's post-War labour policies should be understood as a means to control the increasingly politicised working classes. State actions in this period were an extension of the strategy of bureau-

²⁵ 'Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın Hazırladığı Kanunlar', *Cumhuriyet* (15 Jan 1946).

²⁶ ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, available at: http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/projects/cariblex/conventions_23.shtml.

²⁷ 'Bizde Mecburi Sosyal Sigorta Fikri ve İlk Tatbiki', *Cumhuriyet* (1 July 1946).

cratic reformism, the primary purpose of which was to reform the state in order to better cope with internal conflict and external pressure.²⁸ All three strategies of state control of the ruled classes defined by Therborn were used by the Turkish state: 'In relation to the ruled classes, the state functions as does a supernotable to his clientele, holding it in check by means of petty favors, ideological isolation and physical intimidation'.²⁹ The changes in the legislative and regulative functions of the Turkish state in the post-war context were the results of the increasing difficulty of controlling the labouring classes through mere repression. The petty favours, mostly in the form of social insurance schemes, became a tool with which to contain and control working-class politics in the hands of the state. How the resulting atmosphere of 'democratisation' affected working-class politics will be discussed in the next section.

From Deference to Defiance: The Changing Tone of the Petitions

The above analysis of Mehmet's petitions and the management's replies has suggested that the rules of promotion and pay rates were strictly followed at the factory. A careful look at petitions by other workers, however, reveals that this was not the case. One of these workers was a weaver, also called Mehmet, who had started working at the factory in 1938 and worked without any interruptions until his military service in 1942. Upon his return, he immediately came back to the factory but, after just a few days, he was laid off due to a reduction in the workforce. If it were not for the fact that someone in his department left the factory and that his superiors had favourable opinions of him, Mehmet would have been one of the thousands of Istanbul's unemployed. But he was lucky enough to be hired with an hourly wage of 25 piastres.

However, things had changed after the war. The factory was now working shifts of eight hours, which shortened the working day at least by three hours and thus made a considerable difference in terms of the workers' daily wages. Moreover, years of military service cost Mehmet his right to seniority. In fact, if a worker immediately returned to the factory after completing his military service, his seniority would be calculated from his arrival at the factory. However, mainly due to mistakes made in bookkeeping, many a worker had to fight for previous working days to be included in their seniority benefits. Mehmet did

28 Keyder 1987, p. 50.

29 Therborn 1978, p. 198.

the same when he was laid off in order to increase the number of days on which he was given two hours of paid leave to look for another job. His claim to seniority was accepted, but his demand became redundant as the factory recruited him in the end. Mehmet was well aware of his rights and he did not hesitate to pursue them by means of petitioning.

The post-war years witnessed an increasing discrepancy between consumer prices and wage levels. In July 1946, a newspaper reported that prices had increased by 300 percent since the beginning of the war, while wages increased by only 25 percent.³⁰ By contrast, Ahmet Makal argues that the real wage index reached the 1938 level in 1946 by means of dramatic increases in both monetary and non-monetary wages.³¹ If we were to test these claims on the basis of changes in Mehmet's income, we see a dramatic deterioration. The following petition is from April 1947:

Substance: wage increase

The following is my wish. Although I have been a bobbin master for ten years at your factory, I have worked at the electricity department for an insignificant wage upon my return from the military and five months ago I went back to my old personnel cadre. At the present time I receive a daily wage of 2 liras [i.e. 200 piastres] which would not suffice to get by for an individual let alone a family. In the last round of wage distributions the cleaner got 35 liras whereas I got 25 liras. In 1942 I used to earn 140 liras on average a month whereas now I only earn 52 liras. I have been tolerating this situation and had constancy in my job at the expense of selling some of my furniture. I expect from your high conscience to increase my wage in accordance with my expertise and to save me from this terrible financial situation before I am obliged to sell the bed I sleep on. Weft bobbin foreman assistant Mehmet.

The comparison of the two petitions written by Mehmet the dyer and Mehmet the weaver reveals two striking similarities. First, there is an emphasis on being a 'good worker'. While Mehmet the dyer was referring to gaining the favourable opinion of his superiors, Mehmet the weaver refers to being continuously at work and possessing certain expertise. The latter also cites his immediate return to the factory after military service and his acceptance of the lower pay as his positive qualities. Second, both workers compare themselves with their

30 'Hayat Pahalılığı ve Dar Gelirliler', *Cumhuriyet* (31 July 1946).

31 Makal 2007, p. 132.

fellow workers while formulating their demands for an increase in the face of the very harsh financial conditions in which they were forced to live.

The resemblance between the two petitions stops at this point, giving way to a striking difference in language. In contrast to Mehmet the dyer, Mehmet the weaver is no longer begging, neither is he referring to himself as 'the destitute' or 'the servant'. Instead, he is raising his expertise, which, he claims, should be taken into consideration when his wage level is determined. Well aware that his level of experience and skills are not given the corresponding rewards, he wrote (or had someone write for him) with a tone of exasperation. Finally, in the last sentence of his petition, where he clearly formulated his demand, Mehmet presents himself as a worker who 'expects' rather than 'dares to take refuge in'.

There are four notes under this petition. The first one, probably from Mehmet's foreman, confirms that Mehmet is indeed hardworking and supports his demand for a wage increase of five piastres. The second, by another administrator, repeats this confirmation and support. The third one, probably penned by the chief of the personnel department, provides information on the dates of his arrival and departure, and his wage over time. When he wrote the petition, Mehmet's wage scale was 60 piastres; the last increase in his wage came in December 1946. The fourth note was the shortest: 'notifying [him] that he should wait since he did not complete his time'. The required time was completed in June but Mehmet did not get an increase then either. Finally in September 1947, he wrote another petition:

Substance: settling my account.

The following is my wish. I have been working at the bobbin department as an assistant foreman for ten years. My hourly wage is 30 piastres. Although on 10th of June 1947 both the production unit and the management ordered an increase I could not get any results. Since it is impossible for me to support my family of four with 52 liras a month I kindly request your permission to close my account.

To understand what Mehmet meant with 'impossible to support my family with 52 liras a month', it would suffice to note that in 1946, a family buying two loaves of bread a day would spend 34.6 percent of Mehmet's monthly income.³² Five months had passed after Mehmet wrote that he was about to sell his bed and although he was entitled to an increase three months before he wrote the last petition, his wage had not increased. Once more, it was noted under his petition

32 'Hayat Pahalılığı ve Dar Gelirliler', *Cumhuriyet* (31 July 1946).

that he was a hardworking worker without absenteeism and thus requested an increase in his hourly wage of 5 piastres. Although the note had the same date as Mehmet's petition, the increase came almost a month later. What is most striking in this part of Mehmet's story is the fact that in his personnel file, the increase was attributed to him being a hard worker. Mehmet's struggle to receive what he thought he deserved was thereby lost in the official records since it would be this note which the inspectors would hear about during their visits, or when they asked about information on the workings of the factory. As such, his story constitutes an example on how instances of resistance are silenced in the state archives.

So far, I have provided examples of petitions that asked for an increase on the grounds of extremely harsh financial conditions. What is common to these petitions is their humble tone, adopted in order to convince the management that the petitioner both needs and deserves a wage increase. On the one hand, by means of describing their dire situation with details from their private and family lives, these workers appealed to the management as their protector against the worsening living conditions. The wording of the petitions suggests that a strictly hierarchical structure of labour-management relations prevailed at the factory. Using words such as 'benevolence' and 'despair', the workers mostly stayed away from the discourse of rights and obligations. On the other hand, the emphasis they placed on the category of deserving an increase could be read as a sign that they were aware of the difficulty of finding experienced and skilled workers in the context of an ever-changing labour force at the factory. Likewise, by making comparisons with their fellow workers, they revealed that they had a vision of a fair management policy, which would reward the entire workforce in the same manner. At times, they used the threat of leaving the factory, which worked in some cases and did not work in others. Overall, the petitioners refrained from using the discourse of workers' rights and any sort of implication of collective action.

Let us now go back to the story of Mümin, the worker whose petition we opened this chapter with. We left him in July 1946 when he begged the management for a raise of five piastres. He continued petitioning in the following years and finally addressed an unprecedented addressee. His story demonstrates not only the limits of tolerance by the management towards workers' complaints but also the effects of the political change on workers' struggles. The timing, vocabulary and addressees of his written demands and complaints illustrate the wide array of strategies deployed by the Bakırköy workers in their efforts to demand justice.

Learning the Rules of the Game: Mümin vs. the Management

Mümin was 28 years old when he started working at Bakırköy in 1938. His application form states that he already had experience as an oiler and thus he was employed as such in the maintenance department.³³ Except for a leave of one and a half months in 1940, which was between late July and early September and which, therefore, possibly suggests absenteeism due to the harvest season, he was a continuous worker for a considerably long time. According to his file, Mümin was never fined during his employment; he received many non-monetary provisions between 1945 and 1952 and 15 days of paid leave in 1945, 1946 and 1947. One of his periods of leave, probably in 1949, for five hours in the afternoon, was granted him because he had 'worked too much'. The earliest information about his wage dates from 1941. At the time he earned 18 piastres an hour. He had to wait for more than a year to receive an increase of 2 piastres an hour. After working at this wage level for more than a year his hourly wage was raised to 25 piastres in January 1944 and to 30 piastres in November 1945. By then, the war was over, leaving behind a 300 percent increase in consumer prices,³⁴ but according to the supervisor's note beneath his petition, in July 1946 Mümin was still working for 30 piastres an hour. Moreover, he was probably earning less since the factories slowed down after the war and Bakırköy started three shifts of eight hours a day, which meant a reduction in the daily wages of the workers.³⁵

Under these conditions, Mümin wrote a petition to ask for an increase in July 1946. His complaint was that other workers with similar levels of skill and experience, as well as the apprentices he himself had trained, were earning 50 piastres an hour. During the nine years and nine months he had worked at the factory, he wrote, he had worked without any intervals. A favourable comment was added to the petition: 'He has been receiving 30 piastres an hour since 1.11.1945. He can get an increase'. This commentary, however, is in contradiction with other documents in Mümin's file, which indicate that Mümin had been receiving 35 piastres an hour since February 1946. A possible explanation might be that, although workers fulfilled the required conditions for a wage increase – that is, working six months at the same wage level and gaining the approval

33 I have noted above that this information might not be trustworthy since we have enough reason to believe that the forms were filled out by the clerks according to the labour needs of the departments in the factory at a given time.

34 'Hayat Pahalılığı ve Dar Gelirliler', *Cumhuriyet* (31 July 1946).

35 '24 Saat Çalışma', *Cumhuriyet* (5 February 1947).

of the supervisors – many of them still did not receive an increase. It was the case that Mümin's file was updated without him actually receiving an increase. His next increase came six months after he wrote this petition and his hourly wage was increased to 35 piastres. His file suggests that the success of this petition, although the increase was delayed, was seized upon by him in the following years. After eight years of no written correspondence, Mümin started to effectively use petitioning to pursue his demands. In September 1947, he wrote another petition complaining that his wage was not enough for his subsistence. Surprisingly, this petition had the desired effect; eight months after his last increase, Mümin's wage was raised to 40 piastres an hour.

By August 1948, Mümin either had a high level of self-confidence because of the success of the previous petitions, or he was in a difficult situation financially. Although he had received another increase in May 1948, that is to say seven months after the last one, which was highly unusual, he wrote yet another petition complaining about the high cost of living, which made it very difficult for him to get by with his large family. This time, however, the comment written underneath was not favourable at all: 'His counterparts have not received an increase in one and half–two years. He should wait for a fair treatment'. How long did he have to wait? Who were these counterparts? Why did they not receive an increase? What were management's rules concerning wage levels? These were the questions Mümin also started to ask of the factory management.

Petitioning amidst Uncertainty

Mümin had to wait thirteen months for the next increase, which made his hourly wage 50 piastres. A month later, however, he received another increase of 5 piastres. His status did not change; he was still an assistant foreman in the maintenance department. His file does not include any petitions demanding an increase around this date. The information on wage increases we gather from his file suggests that there were no clearly defined rules or procedures concerning this matter. Not only was each state factory autonomous in determining workers' wages, but clerks at different levels of management appear to have had their own opinion on the matter of wage increases. In Mümin's case, for example, during the period starting between 1942 and 1949, he always received increases of 5 piastres. In 1947 and 1949, increases followed one another within a relatively short period of time. In October 1950, however, Mümin received an increase of only 3 piastres, which came more than a year after the previous one. In March of the following year, the increase was 9 piastres an hour.

All this information on wage levels is repeated in a petition written as a reply to the General Directorate of Sümerbank in April 1951. The records, the factory management claimed, showed that Mümin was given increases regularly in proportion to his seniority. It also noted that, with the last increase, the hourly wage was 67 piastres but it actually amounted to 80 piastres an hour with the addition of the dearness allowance and it was determined on the basis of seniority and skill level. Mümin's file does not contain any other petition written by him around this date. But from other documents in the file we understand that he wrote a petition to a rather curious addressee: the Prime Minister.

The 1950 elections are regarded as one of the most important political developments of Republican history, as the victory of the Democrat Party signalled the end of 27 years of uninterrupted rule by the Republican People's Party. The election results were viewed as the victory of democracy and different social groups celebrated the DP government. Mümin's appeal to the newly elected Prime Minister becomes even more striking when the wider political developments are considered. The supporters of the RPP had regarded Sümerbank as a success story and the party took pride in its efforts to industrialise the country. Having a more liberal agenda than the RPP, the DP criticised state investment in industry on the grounds that it hindered the development of private investment. The act of writing to the new Prime Minister could be possibly read as a reflection of these political battles and their effects on shop-floor dynamics. Unfortunately, we cannot further pursue this line of thought for obvious reasons. However, we could interpret the curious choice of addressee here in one of the possible ways in which petitions could be read: 'an offer by a local population for a coalition with the centre of the state to work against intermediate power holders'.³⁶ It is a common theme among petitioners in different contexts that they 'tried to use perceived fissures within ruling classes, for instance, by addressing a central authority with complaints about a local authority, or addressing a colonial power with demands based on the metropolitan system of justice'.³⁷ In the current example, petitioning gave a state worker the opportunity to directly demand justice and cut through the state bureaucracy, for which he would pay dearly.

Unprecedented in the sample, this petition apparently stirred the factory. Mümin's file contains one of the most interesting documents from the period: the transcription of an interrogation by a department manager. Entitled 'The

36 Van Voss 2001, p. 4.

37 Ibid., p. 6.

Transcript of the Investigation of the Petition', this document creates an almost theatrical effect through the presentation of the interaction between a manager and a worker. For the first time in early Republican Turkish labour history, we hear the seemingly unmediated words of a worker, we follow his line of reasoning, we feel his desperation and embarrassment before the supervisor and other workers and, finally, we observe the strategies he resorts to in order to defend his right to a wage increase. In a sense, the transcript exemplifies a worker's repertoire on matters such as self-image, his perception of authority and his idea of a fair wage. Besides offering a glimpse into a worker's view of his colleagues and the factory management, as well as some of the strategies he used against the managerial ideologies and practices, this document is significant from the perspective of the discursive structuring of the managerial authority on the shop floor.

The transcript contains references to Mümin's petition to the prime Minister. Below, I will reconstruct, as much as possible, the content of that petition and analyse the focal points of the transcript in relation to the insights it offers on working-class identity and consciousness.

The Implementation of a Scale of Salaries from a Worker's Perspective

Mümin began working at Bakırköy in February 1938 as an oiler in the maintenance department. The first question directed to him in the investigation concerns his claim of fourteen years of seniority as an assistant foreman as of 1951. Mümin's reply to this is straightforward: No, he was not a foreman's assistant with fourteen years of experience. Why, then, did he claim so in his petition? The documents concerning Mümin's wage increases and status changes in his file indicate that he was promoted to foremanship in February 1946. This increase is explained as 'promotion', which is different to previous wage increases. His job description changed from 'maintenance oiler' to 'maintenance assistant foreman' on this date. However, if we return to the petition that Mümin wrote in July 1946, we see that he had claimed to have worked as an assistant foreman for the last nine months, which means he got promoted in November 1945. Indeed, Mümin had received an increase on 1 November 1945. However, his payroll document indicates that he was still employed as an oiler in the maintenance department at the time. Earlier, I noted that the information on the changes in employment status, and sometimes including the wage levels, is in contradiction with the testimony of the workers and/or other documents including such information in the files. A possible explanation for this

incongruence might be found in the inspection reports, which cite 'the scale of salaries' as one of the sources of confusion on wage levels.³⁸

Osman Okyar explains the implementation of the scale of salaries and evaluates its effects on the state economic enterprises as follows:

Decentralization and freedom of initiative were dealt another very damaging blow when in 1940 the scale of salaries in the state economic enterprises was fixed by law and connected to the scale of salaries in the central government administration, with the aim of establishing parallelism between the two types of government employees. In the early times of *Étatism* salaries in state economic enterprises had been determined independently and freely with the result that certain high salaries had attracted attention and drawn criticism, and in 1940 the Government yielded to this criticism. This proved to be a crippling handicap in the operation of state economic enterprises. Especially when inflation developed, rate of remuneration increased in the private sector, while the salaries of government employees remained well behind. This led to the loss of the best and most dynamic personnel in the state enterprises.³⁹

Okyar approaches the issue from the perspective of changes in the decision-making process in individual enterprises in this period, while the inspection reports mention the problems related to the application of the scales. To Okyar, the fixing of the scales in 1940 limited the freedom of initiative of the state economic enterprises. However, the aforementioned inspection report indicates extreme difference among state-owned textile factories as late as 1945. According to this, while Bakırköy Factory had fifteen different scales of salaries, Defterdar Factory had thirty-two. Consequently, the difference between the highest and the lowest pay in these two factories was very high: 70 and 10 piastres an hour in Bakırköy and 110 and 9 piastres an hour in Defterdar.⁴⁰ The difference was even more striking when factories in small towns were compared with those in Istanbul. The report criticises these differences, claiming that they functioned as a pull factor for workers and caused them to change their work location.

38 *Sümerbank İşletmelerinde İşletmede İnsan ve İşçi Meseleleri 1945 Yılı Umumi Murakebe Heyeti Raporu*, pp. 40–43.

39 1965, p. 106.

40 *Sümerbank İşletmelerinde İşletmede İnsan ve İşçi Meseleleri 1945 Yılı Umumi Murakebe Heyeti Raporu*, pp. 41–196.

Besides these practical problems, scattered information from the personnel files suggests that there was a division among workers in Bakırköy concerning the implementation of a scale of salaries. While some files explicitly mention the changes in the scale of salary of a certain worker, others give the impression that the pay rate was independent of a predetermined system. Furthermore, in some cases, although the worker received a promotion, his wage was not increased until a position became available in the higher paid salary scale. If we consider that, in July 1946, Mümin claimed that he had been an assistant foreman since November 1945, and that the management did not contest this petition, then we can assume that his case exemplified this problem. The incongruence between the dates of Mümin's wage increase and his promotion might stem from the fact that he had been promoted before the wage scales were adjusted. In other words, he might have been given more responsibility without due pay. The situation caused a second disadvantage for him: the records specified his hourly wage as 35 piastres, whereas he actually worked at 30 piastres an hour.

The interrogation continues with the question on the apprentices who, as Mümin supposedly had claimed, were receiving higher wages than him. In fact, we are already familiar with this claim from Mümin's earlier petitions. In his first petition, he had written: 'My counterparts, as well as the apprentices that I teach, receive fifty piastres'. Five years after this first petition, he still believes that the wage levels of workers of different skill and experience levels were not determined in a just manner. Although he gives up this claim later in the investigation, it must have been an important argument in his petition since the investigator repeats it later on. Unfortunately, these two points are the only direct references to the content of Mümin's petition in the transcript. Had he made other comparisons or given examples of the unfair treatment of workers by the management? We cannot find the answer in the transcript. However, it provides us with a lot more understanding of what Mümin had in mind.

Investigating the Investigation

Moving from the efforts to reconstruct the content of Mümin's petition, we are faced with two questions. First, who are those present at the investigation? Second, what sort of ideas can we gather from the transcript in terms of worker-management relations at the factory? In addition to the three main production departments, Bakırköy Factory had a repair shop and other auxiliary departments such as the canteen. From the very beginning, Mümin had been employed in the maintenance department, which was responsible for taking

care of the machines and other equipment in the production units. He was still working at this department as an oiler when he retired in 1970. The investigator was the chief of the auxiliary departments, that is to say, the manager of the repair shop as well as other units such as the canteen. In the hierarchical structure of the factory management, he was probably located under the factory director and the vice-director. The signature of the chief of the workshop, most likely the repair shop in this context, is also on the transcript, although according to the transcript he did not talk during the investigation. Also present at the investigation were two assistant foremen from Mümin's department. It seems that they were present as representatives of the counterparts that Mümin had referred to more than once in his petitions. Mümin was interrogated in the presence of four other employees, including the secretary, about a petition that he had written sometime between 11 April, the date of the first reply to the Prime Ministry by the factory management, and 30 June 1951, the date of the second reply with references to the aforementioned investigation.

Addressed by the informal, second-person singular pronoun 'sen', Mümin is first informed about the reason of the gathering: 'There is a petition that you have written to the Prime Ministry. Let's talk about it'. Although the chief first says that he would read the petition, either he does not do so or the secretary does not write it down. According to the transcript, he immediately starts off by refuting Mümin's claim of seniority: 'You are not an assistant foreman of 14 years at the maintenance department as you wrote in your petition'. Mümin's reply is short and direct: 'No, I am not'. Why, then, did he write so in the petition? We could consider at least two plausible answers: either Mümin deliberately lied in his petition about his seniority as an assistant foreman to strengthen his demand for a higher wage, or he really made a mistake. Later in the transcript we learn that Mümin did not write the petition himself. But let us proceed line-by-line and focus on the chief's second attempt to corner Mümin with his own words. This time, without directly refuting Mümin's claim, the chief makes a cunning move and asks Mümin to name the apprentices who received higher wages than him. As such, he recognises the plausibility of the allegation but demands proof to substantiate it. Probably, as he expected, Mümin retreats once more and claims he actually meant 'friends', not apprentices. This time, Mümin was most likely twisting the truth. Let me explain why.

In July 1946, four months after his last wage increase, Mümin wrote a petition to the factory management to complain about his wage. He first expressed his dissatisfaction with the amount of the increase: 'Although I have been working for such a [long] time, I have received only five piastres increase'. He knew that the increases were given according to seniority and he used it to strengthen his case. After explaining the severity of his financial situation, he moved

on to his second complaint: 'My counterparts, as well as the apprentices that I teach, receive fifty piastres'. Specifying the apprentices in such a manner, Mümin formulated his demand also with a reference to these 'friends': '... I respectfully ask from your high office to be given wages like those of my friends'.

The interrogator's first two questions seemed to have put Mümin in a difficult situation. He had already admitted two mistakes, or better said, he had admitted one mistake and lied about another, and more was coming from the chief, who gives the impression that he was completely motivated to find the gaps and contradictions between Mümin's petition and his oral testimony. As such, he did not miss the opportunity to set a new trap for Mümin, using the answer he had given to the question about the apprentices. The friends of whom Mümin was speaking were the 'operators'.⁴¹

Most probably, Mümin meant those working in the three main production departments in the factory. The word 'counterparts' must be referring to those with similar levels of seniority. The subsequent two lines give the reader the impression that the chief is putting Mümin to a test by playing the good cop: 'Shall we also transfer you to the operations department?' Mümin's answer was a clear 'no'. Although he was very insistent on getting the raise he claimed to deserve, he was completely against the idea of changing his department. Why was it such a big problem to change one's department within the factory?

Factories within a Factory

Two archival documents could shed light on this matter. The first one is an anonymous hand-written document on the writer's observations at Bakırköy Factory.⁴² Although not dated, we can assume that it was written not many years after Mümin's petition, since it specifies the hourly wage at the factory as between 66 and 231 piastres. These incomplete notes give precise information about working conditions in different parts of the factory.⁴³ The weaving department, for example, is reported to be extremely noisy: 'It was as if cats were screeching while fighting. Here also, a worker was responsible for attending 24 looms. When we went into the dyeing department, the roaring in our ears was still continuing'. And the main problem at the dyeing department was its levels of dampness. In the midst of such terrible conditions, a head foreman

⁴¹ The word he uses is '*işletmeciler*'.

⁴² Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 402, International Institute of Social History Archives.

⁴³ The document starts on p. 14 and goes until p. 21; the first fourteen pages and the twentieth page are missing.

provides information on how the factory management took care of the workers: 'The workers of this department are given utmost care. We give them boots for protection against the dampness, half a litre of milk every day and 3 sets of work clothes every year. Their contributions [probably referring to the social security premiums, G.A.] are also differently paid from the other workers'. Apart from displaying the head foreman's complete identification with the factory management ('We give them ...'), these words reveal most clearly the dangerously difficult and damaging working conditions in the dyeing department. A similar testimony is also found in the second archival material depicting working conditions at textile factories. This is a letter written by a textile worker, who was also a trade unionist, explaining why arthritis, tuberculosis, eye and kidney problems should be listed among occupational diseases caused by working conditions – especially in the yarn departments.⁴⁴ If we return to the analysis of the transcript in light of these first-hand testimonies, after eleven years of work at the factory, it is not surprising that Mümin refuses to be relocated, even though it might involve a wage increase.

The transcript is somewhat repetitive after this point. The chief asks Mümin to clarify a mistake he mentioned in his petition. Once more the topic is a comparison with the other workers. Mümin gives in again: 'There is no mistake', the comparison is between him and those in the operations department. But the unconvinced chief insistently refers to the apprentices, suggesting that they were openly mentioned in Mümin's petition. This time he specifies the alleged wages they received according to Mümin. There is not a single apprentice in the whole operations department earning 80 piastres an hour; Mümin should give names if there is one. Mümin backs down yet again but this time he gives us an important clue about the content of his petition.

On the Question of Authorship

Van Voss reminds us that 'When reading a petition, it is not always easy to decide whom one is reading'. Even if the petitioner was able to write, he continues, 'the fact that petitions had to conform to formal requirements, or had to be written in official language, often required a professional hand'.⁴⁵ The stylistic and discursive differences between the petitions of another worker, Mustafa, who was fired after his last petition, suggests that when things got

44 Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 384, *IISH*.

45 Van Voss 2001, p. 8.

more serious, in other words, when the issue was not a wage increase or a disagreement with the management but the danger of losing the job, Mustafa turned to somebody else for help. The result was a much more analytical and well-formulated text than the previous ones, which were full of simple grammatical and lexical mistakes. This could also have been the case with Mümin, who obviously got somebody else to write his petition to the Prime Ministry. In the first employment document he filled out in 1938, Mümin stated that he was literate. The three petitions he wrote in 1946, 1947 and 1948 are clear texts with well-formulated demands – unlike Mustafa's earlier petitions. Since the petition to the Prime Ministry is missing in the file, we cannot compare it with the earlier ones. We thus do not have enough information even to speculate about the actual author of these petitions. However, Mümin's reply to the chief's question regarding the mistake he allegedly made strongly implies that this last one was not written by him: 'I did not say apprentice, it was written wrong'. With this correction, or better put, 'confession', Mümin must have planted seeds of doubt in the chief's mind. Was he actually denying that the petition belonged to him? No, he was not. Even if somebody else penned it, Mümin had signed the petition himself. Whether he actually got somebody to write it for him or he gave that impression in order to save himself from getting further into trouble, we will never know for sure.

The chief returns to the topic of the allegedly better paid apprentices. It seems that this is really the issue for him – at least at the beginning of the investigation. He made so much effort to prove that Mümin was wrong and he wanted to prove this both to Mümin and to others who were present. Hence, as if it was the first time that he spoke about the subject, he formulated the following question: 'Are there any apprentices with an hourly wage of 71 piastres among your attendants?' The answer is both predictable and clear: 'No, there are not any'. The chief must have got what he wished for with this answer because he immediately drops the topic and moves on to a completely different one, from which we learn that at the time of the investigation Mümin's wage was 67 piastres an hour. The wording of the question 'Do you think 67 piastres an hour is a low wage?' already hints at what would follow. Pretending to leave the judgment to Mümin, the chief actually paves the way for putting him to a test in front of others. But before moving on to that part, we should analyse Mümin's very interesting reply to this tricky question.

According to his personnel file, Mümin had been complaining about his wage level since 1946 at least. The main message of his petitions had been that, with his family of four persons, it was impossible for him to get by. That he received the raise in his first two attempts suggests that the management saw this as a valid reason for a wage increase. Thus, one would expect him to answer

positively when asked if his wage was indeed low. But Mümin refrains from giving a direct answer and says he is entitled to 10 more piastres (an hour). This is a new language that differs dramatically from the helpless tone of the begging petitions. Speaking in a more assertive tone, Mümin expresses his ideas about how things should be in the factory. The fact that the management did not share these ideas did not prevent Mümin from communicating them. Alas, he could not foresee that this attitude of defiance would cost him another verbal attack from the chief.

On the Question of Audience

The interrogator continues with a rhetorical question: 'You are an assistant foreman, aren't you?' Most likely because the secretary recorded the whole conversation, the chief stated the obvious. We can also speculate that he used these rhetorical questions to construct his whole case in the most convincing manner. Moreover, this transcript might have been planned to be submitted to the General Directorate of Sümerbank or the Prime Ministry. If so, we can argue that the investigator had three types of audience. First was the immediate audience, which was composed of Mümin and the other assistant employees. Perhaps above all, the chief wanted to convince Mümin of the invalidity of his claims. Second, the investigation was probably to be read by the higher ranked officers within the management. Thus, the chief also had to make it as clear and convincing as possible for them. Third, if the transcript were to be sent to the office of the General Directorate of Sümerbank or the Prime Ministry, the investigation must appear to be as just and official as possible. It is in this complex context that we should think of the function of the rhetorical questions.

Having secured Mümin's confirmation of his assistant foremanship, the chief makes his next rhetorical move: Logically, if he was an assistant foreman he should have known all the things that an assistant foreman does. As such, Mümin was slowly pushed in the direction of a procedural examination, the first question of which was on measuring a surface. Did he know how to do it? No. What about using the equipment then? He could not do that either. Could he describe a screw? No answer. Mümin's silence gives the impression of a man losing his self-confidence. Imagine a worker who spent thirteen years of his life working at the same factory, and who claimed multiple times before that he 'deserved' a wage increase because he is a 'good' worker, finding himself in a position of complete ignorance before his fellow workers. The picture that could come to mind is of a publicly humiliated worker who bows his head with embarrassment. But this does not stop the chief, who goes on to corner him like

a predator does its prey. He formulates the same question in a more theoretical way: 'How is a screw defined?' This time, Mümin has an answer but apparently it does not help him much, for the chief moves on to a practical challenge and gives him a caliper to measure. Mümin does not even attempt to do it, he admits that he cannot use the caliper and thus he cannot measure it. The next question is not entirely readable but most probably the chief is asking about the number of types of screws. It seems like Mümin had superficial knowledge on this matter but when he was asked to define them he could not answer. At this point, the sample that the chief had a few minutes ago is in the hands of Mümin, as we understand from the next question. When the chief asks him to define the head of the screw, Mümin's answer does not satisfy him either.

From Labour vs. Management to Labour vs. Labour

The two assistant foremen who had remained silent until then suddenly became functional at this point. Mümin had been speaking of the counterparts all along. And now he was being tested before them about the skills and knowledge that he was supposed to have. When he failed, the chief directed the same question first to Şükrü, who gave a technical answer. This was most probably what the chief had been planning all along since the final blow came immediately after this: 'You tell me now, do you deserve this wage?' Once more, the chief is using the question form in order to pretend to leave the judgment to Mümin. However, his answer to this rhetorical question was possibly not what the investigator expected: 'I have not gone to school, sir'. Was he comparing himself with the other two foremen by saying this? We cannot know since their files were not available in the archives. But we know that Mümin was literate – at least he claimed so in 1938 in his application form – but he did not mention any formal schooling. In fact, very few workers in the sample had formal education and if they had, it was only at the level of elementary school. Thus, Mümin was the rule rather than the exception on this matter. Why then did he give this unexpected answer, apparently also unexpected by the chief, to this rhetorical question?

If we divide the transcript into three parts, the content of Mümin's petition was revealed and contested in the first. The focus here was on the claims that he made about the unfairness of the wage differences between himself and his counterparts, and in particular the apprentices. The winner of this first part was clearly the chief, since Mümin accepted his mistakes. Then, in the second part, the chief steered the conversation in the direction of testing Mümin's skills as an assistant foreman since these formed the basis of his claims for a wage

raise. Without any doubt, Mümin lost this part as well. But this time he took the initiative and very intelligently steered the conversation away from the mode of examination by answering a very direct question in an unexpected way. Thus, the final phase of the conversation began, which, above all, is characterised by emotional exploitation.

The chief's reaction to Mümin's unexpected reply is right on target since it addresses his claim of seniority which he had used before to ask for a higher wage. If he was at the factory for such a long time, he should have known the answers to the previous questions: 'How come you do not know this?' Mümin must have been feeling really intimidated by now as he addressed the chief as 'Sir' for the first time. The chief repeats his central question: 'Do you deserve this money?' Once again, Mümin takes refuge in his ignorance. The chief is not interested in this topic, though. At this point, all he wants is to establish the fact that Mümin does not have the required skills to work as an assistant foreman. Instead of stating it himself, however, he makes another tactical move by asking the other assistant foremen whether Mümin deserved the wage he had been receiving. The first one abstains from answering by playing the docile worker: of course the chief knows better. Perhaps he refrained from saying something that would harm his co-worker. His answer probably did not please the chief, who directed the same question to the second assistant foreman. Aziz, speaking for the first and the last time, carries the issue to a completely different level by arguing that Mümin is not qualified enough to work independently. This last sentence must have been enough for the verdict to be given, since the transcript finishes abruptly right after it. The parties sign the transcript, thereby making it official in order to include it in the following reply of the Bakırköy Factory to the General Directorate of Sümerbank:

To the Higher Office of General Directorate of Sümerbank, 30 June 1951

Mümin Kılıç's petition has been examined. The aforementioned, who still serves at the yarn maintenance department as an assistant, is a worker of 13 years who did not have any occupations when he was employed [and] attained the level of assistant foremanship thanks to his continuous working. The untrue statement of this worker who had applied to the higher office of Prime Ministry about his demand for a wage increase has been found groundless. Subjected to a trial, the conviction has been that the complainant, who has not experienced any problems with promotion and has been promoted regularly to higher levels, is not equipped with the knowledge that a maintenance worker must have [and] can only achieve the given task when working with an assistant foreman. We present it to your higher information that the 67 piastres hourly wage

given to such a worker, who cannot do grading/fitting, does not know how to take measurements, has no understanding of using a calliper and who cannot place a cogwheel with instructions, has been determined according to seniority and skill level, and that contrary to his petition there is no apprentice working with him with an hourly wage of 71 piastres before the increase [probably referring to the dearness allowance, G.A.], and that he has been told that he has to go through a period of maturity for his wage to increase to the level of his counterparts.

Bakırköy Cotton Industry Enterprise.

It is with this document that the case closes. Overall, this incident presents the rather immediate effects of the change in state politics on the strategies of state workers. That a worker turns to a newly elected Prime Minister, whose election signified a regime change, suggests how closely developments at this level were followed and acted upon by workers. Thus, this case could be read as an indication of the effects of the political liberalisation process on workers' self-perceptions. Obviously, the topic requires a much deeper analysis, but it suffices to note here the quick and significant effects that macro politics had on the daily struggles of workers. It should also be noted that these effects only become visible at this level of individual acts of resistance and struggle. In the larger frame, these effects seem to be imposed and directed by the ruling classes and the ways rank-and-file workers experience them fall through the cracks of analysis.

Petitions as a Source of Social History in Turkish Labour History

The petitions analysed in this chapter start in 1943 and their frequency increases with time. With the exception of Mümin's petition to the Prime Ministry and Mehmet's letter to the General Directorate of Sümerbank, the petitions are addressed directly to the factory management. They are similar to one another in terms of the opening lines. Although there are workers who only wrote one petition, or whose file contains only one petition, there are also a number of those who wrote more than one. Some workers effectively used petitioning after the success of their first attempt. In terms of content, the petitions are predominantly about wage increases with exceptions for those asking for child or transportation allowance.

In a context where archival material produced by workers themselves is non-existent, petitions written to the factory management provide an opening to the material conditions of work in which workers found themselves;

and these conditions were often considerably different to what we read from state-produced material. They also indicate a rather fast and dramatic change in the verbalisation of workers' grievances and aspirations. The introduction of the multi-party system, the changing culture of parliamentary democracy and the workers' increasing access to legal procedures all came to have an increasing role in the shaping of state-labour relations. This type of microhistorical reconstruction from workers' petitions allows historians to depict the complex ways in which changes in the political context are reflected in working-class behaviour. Although these petitions mainly focused on limited issues and the practicalities of industrial relations negotiations, they still function as openings to workers' experience of industrial labour in a dynamic period of political and social change.

This chronological study of workers' petitions demonstrated the self-definitions and perceptions of workers, both at moments of struggle and those of adaptation to the factory discipline. Five aspects of these documents were analysed in this chapter: timing, frequency, addressee, content and vocabulary. The focus of the analysis has been the linguistic aspects of the workers' presentation of their demands and complaints. By means of a close reading of the historical social vocabulary that was available to the Bakırköy workers against the background of the changing socio-political dynamics, I documented their political perceptions and actions. On the whole, the analysis shows that workers' self-perceptions and the representations of that self-perception underwent a dramatic change in the early Republican period. In connection with the socio-political changes in the wider context, workers gradually developed a vocabulary that allowed them to formulate their demands more effectively. This indicates the slow but steady development of a working-class consciousness among Bakırköy workers.

In a time span of less than ten years, petitions written by Bakırköy workers changed dramatically in terms of their linguistic characteristics. The road from a language of humility, characterised by such words as 'destitute' or 'servant', to a language in which the petitioner recognises himself as a worker with rights and obligations, was rather short in the case of Bakırköy workers. While workers formulated their demands for a wage raise by appealing to the good will of their supervisors in the early 1940s, by the end of the decade they were referring to their skill levels, the discrepancy between wages amongst themselves and their co-workers, and the unfair, humiliating treatment they were subjected to as the basis of their right to a higher wage. The language of petitions thus reveals the lineaments of a language of class.

In analysing the effect of the wider processes of political development within Turkey towards the end of the early Republican period, the critical role

of state coercion could not possibly be overstated. However, I have demonstrated that the relations between state and society in the industrial sphere were far more complex and their boundaries more fluid than is commonly recognised. By documenting labour-management relations on the shop floor through the analysis of workers' petitions, I argued against the confinement of the study of the ideologies and mentalities of ordinary people to the dramatic moments of collective action in Turkish labour historiography. The absence or limitedness of such moments gives way to the conclusion that workers were completely co-opted by the dominant classes. A closer look at the dynamics of workplace relations and the mechanisms of industrial bargaining besides trade-union representation presents a more complicated picture of class consciousness.

Assessing Working-Class Power in Postsocialist China

*Jenny Chan**

Introduction

In this twenty-first-century ‘golden era’ that some have compared favourably to China’s rise to a leader in the world economy from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century,¹ social disparity and urban-rural inequality deepens as China transitions from its position as one of the world’s most egalitarian societies (during the period of state socialism from the 1950s through the 1970s) to one with income inequality on a scale approximating that of the United States.² With a shift in manufacturing from the developed countries of North America, Europe, and East Asia to the emerging economies, China has become not only the workshop of the world, but also the epicentre of labour unrest. Yet even as the size and complexity of China’s working class grows, and social protest proliferates, the language of class has largely disappeared from mainstream Chinese discourse.³ This labour ethnography of post-socialist China shares the intellectual vision and collective endeavour of leftist scholars. An analysis of Chinese labour politics will enrich the development of Global Labour History, which seeks to advance an interdisciplinary and transcontinental approach to explain the transformation of labour relations, the processes of working-class formation and the emergence of workers’ movements in a comparative context.⁴

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1 Li 2008; Arrighi 2009; Hung 2009.

2 Lee and Selden 2008; Davis and Wang 2009.

3 For a few exceptions to depoliticising China, see Wang 2003; Anagnost 2008; Pun and Chan 2008; Lin 2013; Goodman 2014.

4 Van der Linden 2008.

Contemporary Chinese labour conditions are heavily shaped by the state within the global production system. Since the late 1970s under the Open Door Policy, the re-emergence of labour markets has transformed the economy in step with Chinese and international investment, and later the privatisation of numerous socialist state enterprises.⁵ Employment in China's manufacturing sector (relative to agriculture and the service industry) reached an unprecedented 15 percent of the economically active population in the mid-1990s. The percentage would have been even higher if the other 8 to 14 percent of those employed in uncategorised industries were added.⁶ The increase in industrial workers was mainly drawn from the hundreds of millions of rural migrants who, in the wake of de-collectivisation, were absorbed into booming township and village enterprises and export-oriented privately-owned factories, along with state and collective enterprises.⁷ By 2014, the total number of employed people across mainland China reached 773 million,⁸ making some 25 percent of the 3.1 billion working population worldwide.⁹ The fundamental labour rights of many, however, remain largely unprotected.

This chapter discusses the lives and collective struggles of Chinese industrial workers against the intensification of contradictions among labour, capital and the state. By contrast, scholars under dual pressure from the state and academic institutions have shunned 'class analysis' and defined away labour issues as those of 'mobility, migration, and stratification'.¹⁰ In the following sections, I review the radical historical changes in Chinese society, particularly the diversification of ownership and the introduction of capitalist modes of labour control in the context of transnational production. This is followed by an inside look into workers' living and working experiences through workers' literature (such as songs and poems) and scholarly research. At times of crisis, workers with higher consciousness have taken various forms of resistance to defend their rights and interests. Despite successive legal reforms, including the recent trade-union reforms, the state-labour relationship remains contentious.

5 Gallagher 2005; Andreas 2012; So 2013; Chan 2015.

6 Evans and Staveteig 2009, p. 78.

7 Huang 2008.

8 National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 26 February 2015, 'Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2014 National Economic and Social Development,' figure 2, available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/201502/t20150228_687439.html.

9 World Bank 2012, p. 48.

10 Lee and Shen 2009, p. 110.

I conclude with an assessment of the potential growth of workers' power under China's authoritarian regime in the global economy.

The Great Transformation of the People's Republic of China

China's 'economic miracle' is built on a strong foundation of socialist development. Between 1952 (when the First Five-Year Plan was launched) and 1978, national industrial output increased at an average rate of 11.5 percent annually.¹¹ This 'big push' development strategy focused on heavy industry, such as iron and steel, agricultural machinery and the extraction of natural resources. From the late 1970s, the government promoted labour-intensive industrialisation to enhance national competitiveness through international trade. With accelerated urbanisation and export-oriented processing and manufacturing, small and medium-sized Taiwan and Hong Kong enterprises brought in capital to the tune of 107 billion US dollars between 1982 and 1994, more than 70 percent of the realised foreign direct investment during this period.¹² Poverty-alleviation officials facilitated labour migration from villages to prosperous urbanising areas on the southern coast. The goal of inland governments was to obtain remittances and assure the development of marketable skills in young rural migrants.¹³ As the state-guided market reforms deepened in the 1990s and thereafter, the intricate links between capital and the state have grown stronger, unmaking and reshaping the old patterns of Chinese labour relations.

A patriotic song, 'A Spring Story' (1994), celebrates the great economic and social transformation of China during the 1980s and 1990s:

A Spring Story¹⁴

1979, it was Spring

There was an old man who drew a circle on the southern coast of China

As if in a fable, city after city rose up

11 Naughton 2007, p. 56.

12 Hsing 1998, p. 8.

13 Solinger 1999; Murphy 2009.

14 Written in Chinese by Jiang Kairu and Ye Xuquan, with music composed by Wang Yougui (translated by Jenny Chan). Dong Wenhua, a member of the Song and Dance Troupe of the General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, performs 'A Spring Story' in Mandarin. The online music video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO2QmT4xIk8>.

Mountains of gold gathered miraculously
 Spring thunder roused all within and beyond the Great Wall
 Spring sunshine warmed the borders of the Yangtze River
 Oh China, China
 You've made new strides that shake the mountains and rivers
 You've made new strides that shake the mountains and rivers
 Advancing to a fresh new Spring

1992, it was again Spring
 There was an old man who wrote a poem on the southern coast of
 China
 Spring tides rolled between heaven and earth
 Sails were raised all along the path of our long journey
 Spring winds blew across our motherland
 Spring rains sprinkled our hometown
 Oh China, China
 You've painted a new hundred-year long scroll
 You've painted a new hundred-year long scroll
 And brought forth a new Spring of fantastic colours

'A Spring Story' praises Deng Xiaoping (1904–97), successor to Hua Guofeng (1921–2008) and Mao Zedong (1893–1976), who is referred to as 'an old man' in the lyrics. Deng prioritised the Four Modernizations of industry, agriculture, national defence and science and technology to facilitate China's opening to the world. The two verses recall the two Springs of 1979 and 1992. The first verse praises the Dengist policies and the economic boom following the decisions made at the 3rd Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party in December 1978.¹⁵ 'Drawing a circle' alludes to the establishment of the Special Economic Zones in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen, Hainan Island and other coastal cities which were first opened up in a bid to integrate China into the global economy. 'Thunder, sunshine, tides, winds, and rains' depict the change as cataclysmic, with the economic reforms transforming villages like Shenzhen into world-class cities, amidst the light, breeze, warmth and water of spring. In the retrenchment following the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, Deng launched the Southern Tour to speed up infrastructural construction and investment projects in Guangdong in Spring 1992. This is the main theme of the second verse. 'Writing a poem' alludes to

15 Vogel 1989 and 2011.

a springtime brought about by the series of investment policies introduced by the government. The song testifies that Chinese people anticipated good fortune, vitality and prosperity in the next century.

Following China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in 2001, the country's further liberalisation and economic growth spurred dreams of success from all walks of life. When the decades-old Multi-Fiber Arrangement was phased out on 1 January 2005, more than 2,000 textile and clothing categories were freed from export ceilings. In the first quarter of 2005, Chinese apparel and textile imports into the United States rose by more than 60 percent in comparison to 2004.¹⁶ While China's economy was hit hard during the 2008 global financial crisis, as exports had comprised one-third of gross domestic product in value, it recovered quickly in the latter half of 2009 following the rollout of a four trillion yuan fiscal stimulus plan over 27 months – jointly funded by the government and state and non-state enterprises – which was 'equal to three times the size of the United States' effort'.¹⁷

In a span of three decades (1978–2008), the Chinese industrial economy had undergone a rapid and fundamental transformation from one exclusively based on heavy industry, with guaranteed lifetime employment and generous welfare provided to urban state sector workers, to one that mainly relies on foreign and private investment and the massive use of rural migrant labourers in light export-oriented industries, as well as drastically restructured state-owned enterprises.¹⁸ In rapidly industrialising regions, urban residents and rural migrants compete for jobs, dragging down wages and social standards. The partly proletarianised Chinese migrant workers, in particular, have been subject to social discrimination and economic disadvantage associated with their inferior citizenship status.¹⁹ Worse yet, the most vulnerable internal migrants could no longer hold on to their 'welfare land' for rural subsistence, which is exacerbated by the marketisation and commercialisation of social services such as children's education and medical care. In fact, some have long abandoned their small plots of farmland, while others have their land illegally taken by property developers or entrepreneurial local states in the

16 International trade statistics of the Commerce Department of the United States, quoted in Evelyn Iritani, 20 April 2005, 'As Textile Curbs Fall, Many Feel Hardship', *Los Angeles Times*, available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/apr/20/business/fi-textiles20>.

17 Wong 2011, pp. 2–3.

18 Blecher 2010; Friedman and Lee 2010; Friedman and Kuruvilla 2015.

19 The Chinese rural migrant workers are entitled to agricultural land at their registered birth villages, hence the incomplete or unfinished proletarianisation.

course of 'development'.²⁰ As a result, their dependence on wage employment has become the primary, if not the only, means to sustain their everyday living.

From a Marxist perspective, wage-workers are 'doubly free' individuals, who are 'free' to find jobs in the market by selling their labour power, and 'freed' from capital ownership.²¹ When *Time* magazine nominated workers in China as the runner-up in the 2009 Person of the Year, the editor commented that they have brightened the future of humanity by 'leading the world to economic recovery'.²² What is certain is that the new generation of Chinese workers, those who were born after 1980 in the market economy, will continue to strive to achieve basic labour and human rights in the face of heightened inequality structured by corporations and the post-socialist state.

The Lives and Deaths of Chinese Workers

With the influx of foreign direct investment and the relaxation of state restrictions on rural-to-urban migration since the 1980s, successive cohorts of internal migrant workers have been drawn into the labour market. Young rural migrants, in their late teens and 20s, comprise the majority of the new industrial workforce. In their own words, we can hear the aspirations for personal freedom and success. As a woman worker commented: 'If I had to live the life that my mother has lived, I would choose suicide'.²³ Growing corn and wheat on tiny parcels of land and keeping a few pigs and chickens may not leave her hungry, but getting ahead and moving upward is nearly impossible if one seeks to eke out a living on the small family plot. If many among the first generation of rural migrants²⁴ returned to their villages to marry, settle in, and raise children, the times have changed. The second generation has its eyes firmly on the cities.²⁵

'Birds, don't be silly, no one cares whether you're tired from flying, people only care how high you fly', mused a 19-year-old migrant working girl.²⁶ Coming from a village in central China, she hoped to secure a better life for her mother

20 Sargeson 2004; Chen and Wu 2006; Chuang 2014.

21 Marx 1990.

22 Austin Ramzy, 16 December 2009, 'Person of the Year 2009, Runners-Up: The Chinese Worker', *Time*, available at: http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1946375_1947252_1947256,00.html.

23 Yan 2008, p. 25.

24 Lee 1998; Sargeson 1999; Rofel 1999; Chan 2001; Pun 2005; Jacka 2006; Kim 2013.

25 Pun and Lu 2010; Chan and Selden 2014; Gaetano 2015.

26 Chan 2013.

and herself in Shanghai. Before around 2005, Chinese manufacturing wages had remained consistently low during the previous decades.²⁷ Thereafter, in the face of a tightened labour market, due in part to a slower growth of births and to a higher level of job mobility among the well-educated young people, employers have been increasingly compelled to raise wages to attract job seekers.²⁸ At the same time, state efforts to boost incomes between 2008 and 2012 led to a 12.6 percent average annual increase in the statutory minimum wage.²⁹ Urban consumption, along with (the myth of) success of upward mobility, has attracted dreamers from underdeveloped regions to fast-growing cities.

Official statistics show that in 2014 the average wage of a rural migrant worker in China was 2,864 yuan/month (including overtime premiums), a 9.8 percent increase from the previous year.³⁰ Notwithstanding the modest wage increase, the income gap between working people and the wealthy has greatly widened. The data for 2013 indicate that China's Gini is 0.47 (internationally, a Gini coefficient of 0.4 or above is considered high)³¹ – a level comparable to that of Nigeria, and slightly higher than that of the United States (0.45), where income inequality has risen steadily over decades.³² More recently, the Hurun Research Institute shows that as of 2015 China ranked number two on the billionaires' list with 430 billionaires, just behind the United States (with as many as 537 billionaires). The combined net worth of the Chinese billionaires is 1.2 trillion US dollars.³³ When the richest are consuming luxuries more than ever before, wage-earners are trying to make ends meet.

27 Hung 2008.

28 Eggleston et al. 2013; Davis 2014.

29 China Briefing, 4 January 2013, 'China Initiates New Round of Minimum Wage Increases', available at: <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2013/01/04/china-initiates-new-round-of-minimum-wage-increases.html>.

30 National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 29 April 2015, 'Investigative Report on the Monitoring of Chinese Rural Migrant Workers in 2014,' table 9 (In Chinese), available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/201504/t20150429_797821.html.

31 The Gini coefficient, the most widely used indicator of income inequality, ranges between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds with perfect equality (where everyone has the same income) and 1 corresponds with perfect inequality (where one person has all the income and everyone else has zero income). It is widely believed that China's official Gini results understate income inequality. Nevertheless, official results convincingly document the broad trend of growing inequality over several decades.

32 *The Economist*, 26 January 2013, 'Gini Out of the Bottle', available at: <http://www.economist.com.hk/news/china/21570749-gini-out-bottle>.

33 The Hurun Research Institute, 3 February 2015, 'Hurun Global Rich List 2015,' available at: <http://www.hurun.net/en/ArticleShow.aspx?nid=9607>.

Inflation and urban living costs have gone up. Workers' earnings have been quickly eaten up by the landlords and shop owners, pushing them to do more overtime work or cut back on everyday expenses. When the government fails to provide affordable housing and other resources to meet the growing needs of its people, many workers are left on their own to address their 'personal' problems. Employers utilise the 'dormitory labour system' to maximise control of the labour force by bringing together the production site and the workers' living quarters within the company compound, or immediately adjacent to it. This socio-spatial design of 'living at work' is also geared to lowering production costs.³⁴ Maintaining dormitories in which a dozen workers share a room costs the factory boss far less than the wages necessary for workers to find their own individual or family housing.

In booming private markets, rent, utilities and property management fees vary widely, ranging from 400 to 500 yuan for a room of 10 square metres, doubling or tripling the standard factory dorm rate. Behind the façade of economic prosperity, 24-year-old worker Xu Lizhi (1990–2014) took his own life on 30 September 2014. A native of rural Guangdong, his multiple attempts to find employment that would allow him to escape from the assembly line, such as a position as a librarian or journalist, ended in failure. He left this poem:

Rented Room

A space of ten square meters
 Cramped and damp, no sunlight all year
 Here I eat, sleep, shit, and think
 Cough, get headaches, grow old, get sick but still fail to die
 Under the dull yellow light again I stare blankly, chuckling like an idiot
 I pace back and forth, singing softly, reading, writing poems
 Every time I open the window or the wicker gate
 I seem like a dead man
 Slowly pushing open the lid of a coffin³⁵

Life has become depressing: inexpensive rental rooms have no windows. Some have a narrow window set very high, near the ceiling, which overlooks nothing

34 Pun and Chan 2013.

35 Xu Lizhi, 2 December 2013 (translated anonymously and published on the Nao blog). Friends of the Nao Project, 29 October 2014, 'The Poetry and Brief Life of a Foxconn Worker: Xu Lizhi (1990–2014)', available at: <https://libcom.org/blog/xulizhi-foxconn-suicide-poetry>.

but at least is a link to the outside world, the noise of the road, sunlight and wind. Some complexes are infested with rats and cockroaches.

The lyrics of a Chinese song, 'Shenzhen, Shenzhen', struck a chord with many amongst the working poor:

Shenzhen, Shenzhen
 The years pass one after the other
 And I change one job for another
 The amount I earn never amounts to much
 But I have accumulated fistfuls of grievances.
 Shenzhen, oh Shenzhen,
 Are you still the Shenzhen of my heart?
 Or are you just a stop along the way?
 When I leave you, where will I go?³⁶

Shenzhen, on the northern border of Hong Kong, is a typical young-migrant city. In 2013, with just three million urban residents, that is, official residents of the city, it had nearly 13 million internal migrants who comprised the core of the labour force.³⁷ Their number included not only rural migrants but also urban workers from other cities, who similarly tried their luck in global Fortune 500 firms.

Taiwanese-owned Foxconn Technology Group is China's largest private employer and the world's biggest electronics manufacturer. The more than one million Chinese workers employed by Foxconn assemble smartphones, personal computers, digital music players, e-book readers, digital cameras, game consoles, TVs, and many more devices that are increasingly connected and integrated into our homes and offices. An ever shorter production cycle and finishing time placed intense pressures on the frontline workers, who before the spate of suicides in spring 2010 were at the local minimum wage. A group of sociologists showed their empathy in a public statement dated 18 May 2010:

36 'Shenzhen, Shenzhen', a migrant worker's song, with music composed by Xu Duo. Performed by Power Bass D Worker Band, in Mandarin, available at: <http://powerbassdworkerband.bandcamp.com/album/aint-no-easy-life>. Translated by Jenny Chan.

37 *Shenzhen Evening News*, 22 January 2013, 'An Increase of 295,900 Residents with Urban Hukou [Household Registration Status] in Shenzhen Last Year', (In Chinese), available at: http://wb.sznews.com/html/2013-01/22/content_2357412.htm.

From the moment they [the new generation of rural migrant workers] step beyond the doors of their houses, they never think of going back to farming like their parents ... The moment they see there is little possibility of building a home in the city through hard work, the very meaning of their work collapses. The path ahead is blocked and the road to retreat is closed. Trapped in this situation, the workers face a serious identity crisis and this magnifies psychological and emotional problems. Digging into this deeper level of societal and structural conditions, we come closer to understanding the 'no way back' mentality of these Foxconn employees.³⁸

In 2010, 18 rural migrant workers attempted suicide at Foxconn's facilities across China, resulting in 14 deaths, while four survived with crippling injuries. They ranged in age from 17 to 25 – the prime of youth. Local and international media dubbed the tragic events the 'suicide express'.³⁹

Suicide may be understood as one extreme form of labour protest chosen by some to expose a repressive production regime in which workers are deprived of dignified work and lives. Former Foxconn worker Yan Jun wrote this poem in memory of her fellow workers who had committed suicide:

For My Departed Brothers and Sisters

I'm like you

I was just like you:
A teenager leaving home
Eager to make my own way in the world

I was just like you:
My mind struggling in the rush of the assembly line
My body tied to the machine
Each day yearning to sleep
And yet desperately fighting for overtime

In the dormitory, I was just like you:
Everyone a stranger

38 The full 18 May 2010 statement in Chinese and translated English on Foxconn suicides in China. Available at: <http://sacom.hk/appeal-by-sociologists-address-to-the-problems-of-new-generations-of-chinese-migrant-workers/>.

39 Chan and Pun 2010; Pun and Chan 2012; Chan 2013; Pun et al 2014.

Lining up, drawing water, brushing teeth
 Rushing off to our different factories
 Sometimes I think I'll go home
 But if I go home, what then?

I was just like you:
 Constantly yelled at
 My self-respect trampled mercilessly
 Does life mean turning my youth and sweat into raw material?
 Leaving my dreams empty, to collapse with a bang?

I was just like you:
 Work hard, follow instructions and keep quiet

I was just like you:
 My eyes, lonely and exhausted
 My heart, agitated and desperate

I was just like you:
 Entrapped in rules
 In pain that makes me wish for an end to this life

Here's the only difference:
 In the end I escaped the factory
 And you died young in an alien land
 In your determined bright red blood
 Once more I see the image of myself
 Pressed and squeezed so tightly I cannot move.⁴⁰

Suicide is an intensely personal, and social, struggle. In suicide protests, workers have exposed the high-pressure conditions under which many work for low wages and for extremely long hours. They unveiled the reality of the inhumane treatment behind the mainstream discourse of corporate ethics and social harmony, drawing attention from image-conscious global companies and stability-obsessed government officials. In November 1970 in South Korea, 22-year-old textile worker Chun Tae-il immolated himself as a means to call on the gov-

40 Written by Yan Jun, a former female Foxconn worker, and translated by Greg Fay and Jeff Hermanson. Yan Jun's poem in original Chinese is available at: <https://www.douban.com/note/g2040164/>.

ernment to protect workers' rights. His desperate act inspired the labour and democratic movements that followed and helped transform South Korean society, galvanising 'collective action by mobilizing the "hearts and minds" of the target audience'.⁴¹ Did the Chinese workers at Foxconn, not unlike their Korean peers,⁴² engage in micro-mobilisation by leaping to their deaths to awaken the people?

Workers' Consciousness and Collective Actions

Behind the 'Made in China' label is a vast network of global brands, component suppliers and final assemblers. The fragmentation of labour and the diversification of ownership in the hands of Chinese and international capital have profoundly challenged both workers and trade unions. Under the state-guided policies of marketisation and globalisation, some 60 million workers and staff lost their jobs during the corporate restructuring and privatisation waves between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s.⁴³ Surviving state-owned enterprises have now generally offered fixed-term employment contracts, ending a lifetime 'iron rice bowl' tenure that had recently been prevalent. Other employing units, however, failed to provide labour contracts, minimum statutory wages or welfare benefits as they were oriented to maximise profits and cut costs in intensified market competition.⁴⁴

Industrial workers in China, as in other countries, take one or more types of collective action to amplify their demands. In the summer of 1985, it was reported that a strike by 2,500 workers, most of them rural women migrants, broke out at the Sanyo electronics factory in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. The strike might be 'partly explained by the tensions characteristic of the Chinese-Japanese relationship' and 'indicative of labour unrest elsewhere in the zone'.⁴⁵ Whether the nationalistic or anti-Japanese motive was an underlying factor,⁴⁶ workers highlighted that 'Sanyo pushed them too hard, demanding

41 Kim 2008, p. 549.

42 Doucette 2013.

43 Solinger 2009; Hurst 2009.

44 Kuruvilla, Lee and Gallagher 2011.

45 Andors 1988, p. 34.

46 Managers as 'running dogs' and 'traitors' were also noted in other labour conflicts at Taiwanese- and Hong Kong-owned factories in both the past and the present. Thus, the uneasy Sino-Japanese relationships may or may not have led to the final Sanyo labour outbursts.

better quality and more efficiency'.⁴⁷ Apparently, class conflict was intense, culminating in the outbreak of collective resistance. While labour strikes and protests had not received much attention from Chinese labour scholars and political scientists until the 1990s, investigations on the causes of the discontent, mobilisation processes, and the outcomes of workers' actions have been increasing since.⁴⁸ Government officials are increasingly concerned about mediating and diverting labour disputes from the street to administrative and judicial institutions.

Official statistics show that in 1996 48,121 labour disputes were accepted for arbitration, the total spiralling to 120,191 in 1999, involving more than 470,000 labourers as numbers soared in the context of massive layoffs of state-sector workers. The upward trend continued from 2000, reflecting widespread incidences of rights violations over wages and welfare-benefit compensations as the non-state and state sector expanded.⁴⁹ Labour cases further skyrocketed to 693,465, involving more than 1.2 million labourers nationwide in the economic crisis of 2008.⁵⁰ With caseloads soaring, the government 'has struggled to maintain its labour system through more direct management of labour disputes'.⁵¹ The speedy settlement of high-profile worker protests through direct government mediation is undertaken to quickly restore 'social harmony'. In the 'activist state', local officials make extensive use of discretionary power to intervene in collective labour disputes.

Much of workers' resistance to date was short-lived and localised, being confined to a single workplace, without forming broader alliances across geographical regions. In two well-documented strikes in South China, namely, the 2010 Honda strikes⁵² and 2014 Yue Yuen strikes,⁵³ government officials actively

47 Andors 1988, p. 35.

48 Tanner 2004; Lee 2007, and 2010; Pun, Chan and Chan 2010; Pringle 2013; Elfstrom and Kuruvilla 2014; Friedman 2014; Becker 2014; Zipp and Blecher 2015.

49 Gallagher 2006; Gallagher and Dong 2011.

50 *China Labour Statistical Yearbook* 2013, 2014, Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2014, pp. 348–9.

51 Gallagher 2014, p. 87.

52 In May and early June 2010, 1,800 Honda employees participated in an on-off factory-wide strike. For detailed accounts, see Butollo and ten Brink 2012, Chan and Hui 2012, and Lyddon et al 2015.

53 Taiwanese-owned Yue Yuen Industrial (Holdings) Ltd., whose sports shoes are sold to Nike, Adidas, Timberland, and other global brands, is the world's largest footwear supplier. When worker-management negotiations broke down, a factory-wide strike involving more than 40,000 workers and staff closed the plant during 14–25 April 2014, compelling government officials to mediate the disputes onsite. See Chen 2015 for an ethnographic study.

engaged in collective bargaining with strikers on the one hand, and managers on the other. The primary goals were to end the strikes and to consolidate the state's legitimacy for the authoritarian regime. The 1,800 workers and student interns at Honda (Nanhai) parts assembly plant demanded a 800 yuan per month pay rise by taking direct action. The Honda worker leaders also insisted on reforming their trade union. Government mediators attended meetings and led discussions of dispute settlements at the factory site. At Yue Yuen (Dongguan) footwear factory, over 40,000 workers called for full payment of pensions and housing provident funds that the company had denied them. Under the Chinese labour law, employers are legally required to provide five types of social insurance: old-age pensions, medical insurance, work-injury insurance, unemployment benefits and maternity insurance, but the vast majority of those workers classified as rural migrants lack rudimentary access to such benefits. When the workers of Honda and Yue Yuen stood up to fight for their rights, they gained the support of non-governmental labour rights groups and won partial victories.

In response, corporate management has prioritised and strengthened labour controls with an emphasis on profit, organisational flexibility and production efficiency at the expense of the workers' well-being. Some assembly-line operators understand that they stand at a strategic production base within tight delivery schedules for iPhones, which are precisely timed to be released during holiday seasons and for new product launch dates. This awareness potentially enhances their workplace bargaining power and empowers workers to schedule strikes at times of crises for maximum impact and leverage.⁵⁴ Frances Piven has succinctly examined the nature of 'interdependent power', highlighting the fact that employers are dependent on workers' consent to labour – perhaps more dependent than ever before in our closely connected economy. She writes:

Distinctive features of contemporary capitalist economies make them exceptionally vulnerable to the withdrawal of cooperation; in other words, to the strike power in its many forms. These features include extended chains of production, reliance on the Internet to mesh elaborate schedules of transportation and production, and just-in-time production doing away with the inventories that once shielded corporations from the impact of the production strike.⁵⁵

54 Chan, Pun and Selden 2013, 2015 and 2016.

55 Piven 2014, p. 226.

When discontent is clearly articulated and shared in these 'emergent sentiments of collective identity',⁵⁶ workers unite to undertake joint actions to secure their rights and interests. Significantly, workers acquire organising and communication skills in and through successive struggles.⁵⁷

Local officials, including trade-union cadres, have skilfully developed a wide array of 'protest absorption' techniques to resolve labour disputes at the scene, with the aim of maintaining sociopolitical stability, such as redefining workers' 'realistic expectations', and thereby lowering their claims to lawful compensation. At the same time, government representatives exert pressure on the management to grant some economic concessions to the most adversely affected workers, and simultaneously manipulate workers' familial and social relations to silence the resistance.⁵⁸ Lawyers and judges also arrive at the site of protest to prevent labour conflict from escalating, or take actions to dismantle the collective lawsuit from within the judicial system.⁵⁹ Worker solidarity frequently dissipated when leaders were intimidated, arrested, and bought off, or when state-brokered settlements yielded limited gains for the workers. The immediate result is that, in many cases, workers' individual grievances are partially addressed and collective actions broken up.⁶⁰ Fundamentally, the power between labour and capital remains highly imbalanced, engendering hidden as well as open defiance and deepening the crisis of production and social reproduction.

Chinese Trade-Union Reforms and Labour Unrest

In the face of increasing worker lawsuits and strikes since the mid-1990s, the Chinese government was compelled to rebuild its centralised trade-union organisation, and to expand legal reforms to ensure minimally acceptable social and labour standards as a means to alleviate the growing tensions between legitimacy and profitability.⁶¹ What are the prospects for Chinese workers to strengthen their associational power in the fight for dignity and decent work?

56 Mann 1973, p. 50.

57 Herbert Marcuse stressed the emancipatory potential of a resistance that is 'diffused, concentrated in small groups and around local activities, small groups which are highly flexible and autonomous'. See Kellner 2004, p. 126.

58 Chen 2010; Su and He 2010; Deng and O'Brien 2013; Lee and Zhang 2013.

59 Chen and Xu 2012.

60 Chen 2012.

61 Diamant, Lubman and O'Brien 2005; Liebman 2014.

Chinese law ostensibly gives workers basic rights, including the right to elect union representatives, the right to vote union representatives out of office if they do not represent them and protection against discrimination for participating in union activities. The only officially recognised Chinese trade-union organisation, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, whose strength had been centred in state-owned enterprises, lost at least 17 million members between 1997 and 2000 alone through privatisation and layoffs.⁶² The state-run union bureaucracy then targeted large foreign-invested companies to unionise. By January 2012, the Chinese trade-union federation had a total membership of 258 million⁶³ (the numbers surpass the International Trade Union Confederation's global membership of 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories excluding China), of whom 36 percent (94 million) were rural migrant workers, the fastest growing segment of the union since the early 2000s.⁶⁴ This stands in sharp contrast to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and many other countries, where private-sector labour unions have shrunk to a small percentage of the industrial and service workforce as a result of corporate restructuring and the export of jobs. In practice, financial and organisational dependence on management severely undermines the capacity of China's grassroots unions to represent workers.⁶⁵

Without effective representation at the workplace level, many workers have condemned and bypassed the management-controlled union to fight for their rights and interests. Tim Pringle, in assessing the future of Chinese union reforms in light of growing labour challenges, stresses the need not only for 'more accountable enterprise-level union chairpersons and committees' but 'more supportive, interactive and, at times, directive relationships between the higher trade unions and their enterprise-level subordinates'.⁶⁶ To maintain a stable market economy, the state continues to search for mechanisms to resolve labour conflicts (such as offering guidance and support for direct elections at enterprise-level trade unions),⁶⁷ while simultaneously embracing development policies that subject society to the deep structural problems of global capitalism.

62 Traub-Merz and Kinglun Ngok (eds.) 2012, p. 28.

63 *China Labour Statistical Yearbook 2012, 2013*, Beijing: China Statistics Press, pp. 405–6.

64 *Xinhua*, 7 January 2012, '20% of Chinese Join Trade Unions', available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-01/07/content_14400312.htm.

65 Chen 2009.

66 Pringle 2011, p. 162.

67 Howell 2008; Kong 2012; Wen and Lin 2015.

Changing State-Labour Relationships in China

The pro-capital nature of the Chinese state is central to our understanding of the recurrent worker tragedies and class conflicts all over the country. At the turn of the millennium, Beijing leaders attempted to rebalance the economy through the 'Go West' development campaign, which has extended to 12 interior provinces and autonomous regions comprising 71 percent of China's total land area.⁶⁸ Intel, HP, Motorola, Samsung, Acer, Foxconn and other corporations have moved their research and production operations inland in sync with this government policy, creating the possibility that China's skewed development, which overwhelmingly favoured the coastal areas in the most recent four decades, could be reversed. A substantial number of workers are being recruited from within the interior provinces, in some cases close to their hometowns. While the east and south coasts were still the primary destination for rural migrant workers, the regional disparity narrowed. In 2014, 107 million migrants worked in the eastern region, 94 million in the central region and 73 million in the western region.⁶⁹

Under decentralisation, regional competition to secure and hold foreign investment across the coastal provinces and between the interior regions is very intense. Corporate access to cheap land, labour and numerous privileges is made possible with the full backing of the states at all levels. Provincial and lower-level governments have systemically channelled financial and administrative resources to facilitate business expansion and factory relocation. In Chengdu, the provincial city of Sichuan in southwestern China, for example, 'it was impossible not to come across evidence of the state's hand in the fostering of high-tech industry'.⁷⁰ Astonishingly, local officials have systemically recruited teenage student interns from vocational schools to labour-hungry companies in the name of business-school partnership during the peak production months. The unfree and underpaid 'student workers' have become an integral part of the Chinese working classes.⁷¹ Indeed, 'several forms of commodified labour' often co-exist,⁷² serving the interests of capitalists, to

68 Lai 2002; Goodman 2004.

69 National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 29 April 2015, 'Investigative Report on the Monitoring of Chinese Rural Migrant Workers in 2014 (In Chinese)', available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/201504/t20150429_797821.html.

70 Ross 2006, p. 218.

71 Chan, Pun and Selden 2015a.

72 Van der Linden 2004a, p. 144.

which we may further add the entrepreneurial states, in their fight for economic and political capital.

The informalisation or casualisation of labour in China and other countries has become an unmistakable trend.⁷³ Recent empirical studies show that firms were increasingly pressured to cut costs and to cope with fluctuations in production orders by hiring temporary workers, including student interns (also termed student apprentices or trainees) and agency labourers (also known as dispatched workers, who sign contracts directly with privately-run or government-operated agencies but provide services to client companies).⁷⁴ These temporary labourers' per capita cost averages only one-fourth to one-third of that of the regular workers.⁷⁵ Unequal treatment of the temporary and regular workers performing identical production tasks created a two-tiered employment system. This system has engendered worker conflicts and social divisions because it is 'problematic not just from the perspective of the informal workers, but also from [that of] the regular workers, who will find it increasingly difficult to make collective demands on their employers'.⁷⁶ The hostility, anger and distrust from within the Chinese working class have become inevitable, and this in turn imposes huge social and political pressures on both the employers and the government.

Conclusion

As capital moves across the globe, 'global supply bases' have emerged in rapidly developing economies, where production activities and market transactions are taking place at competitively low prices, high speed, and in huge volumes.⁷⁷ China, by purchasing power parity, surpassed the United States to become the world's largest economy in 2014.⁷⁸ The very gains that Chinese workers have achieved in raising big wages over the last decade, however, had already resulted in a situation in which multinational corporations transfer factories from China to areas with lower wages such as Vietnam, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, India and other countries. However, the 'race to the bottom' has

73 Standing 2011, and 2014a; Lee and Kofman 2012; Burawoy 2015.

74 Zhang 2015.

75 Park and Cai 2011, pp. 33–5; Zhou 2013, pp. 362–3.

76 Friedman and Lee 2010, p. 513.

77 Sturgeon, Humphrey and Gereffi 2011; Henderson and Nadvi 2011.

78 International Monetary Fund, October 2014, 'World Economic Outlook Database,' available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/02/weodata/index.aspx>.

rarely proceeded without labour, social and/or environmental challenges at sites of new investment.⁷⁹ As the backbone of the nation's industrial development, young workers have higher expectations than their parents. 'Realise the great Chinese dream, build a harmonious society', reads a government banner.⁸⁰ To realise individual and national dreams, workers will have to advance the fight for justice.

Marcel van der Linden highlights that a wide range of labour responses and actions is integral to the struggle against hegemonic power (see also Karl Heinz Roth's chapter in this volume). The continued resistance by Chinese workers may inspire and catalyse new forms of consciousness and organisation, opening possibilities for socio-political and economic alternatives. Demographic changes have slowed the growth of the working-age population at a time of general aging, and all indicators suggest that there will be a reduction in the labour supply in coming decades,⁸¹ potentially increasing the marketplace bargaining power of workers. At present, however, workers face numerous obstacles to building their movements. The state-labour relationships are contentious, requiring ever more legislative efforts and direct involvement in labour management by government officials.

While its extraordinary growth rates have begun to slow, China's trade and investment still have a significant local, regional and global impact. As economic activities are expanding outside of China's coastal cities, a substantial workforce is now being recruited within the inland regions, and many migrant workers are being sent back from urban centres to their home provinces, in some cases close to their hometowns, where they may draw on local social networks for support – not only for daily life but perhaps also in renewed struggles for fairness and justice with profit-maximising corporations, the official trade-union establishment, and a powerful state apparatus. With a greater sense of

79 Silver 2003; Smith, Sonnenfeld and Pellow 2006; Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout 2008; Liu 2015.

80 The author's translation from Chinese.

81 Two sets of demographic data are particularly relevant. (1) Gu and Cai 2011: Chinese fertility is presently 1.6 children per woman, down from more than 6 children in the 1950s and 2.5 in the 1980s. The number of labourers aged 20–24 is projected to decline from 125 million people in 2010 to approximately 80 million in 2020. (2) China's 2010 Population Census: It showed that the age group 0–14 comprised 16.6 percent of total population, down 6.3 percent compared with the 2000 census data. See National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 28 April 2011, 'Press Release on Major Figures of the 2010 National Population Census', available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/NewsEvents/201104/t20110428_26448.html.

entitlement associated with belonging to a place, and perhaps greater social resources to bring to the fight for their interests (regarding wages, reduced work time for family and a balanced life, benefits, working conditions, job tenure and security, public health, environmental quality, housing, education and the full range of citizenship rights in the places where they live and work), the result may be enhanced working-class power in factories and local communities.

In conclusion, acquiescence and labour insurgency are both observed at the point of global production. Young Chinese workers, who have no fewer desires and expectations regarding cosmopolitan consumption than their Western counterparts, may render themselves vulnerable to co-optation by a capital-state alliance diversifying its economy to generate and meet rising consumer demands. Will the current period of protest in localised sites of resistance across China develop further through alliances across class lines and across the urban-rural divide into a more broadly based social movement, against the backdrop of rapid industrialisation and capital relocation? To a significant extent, the answer will hinge not only on the evolving consciousness and praxis of the new generation of Chinese workers in the age of global capitalism, but also on the ways in which the state prioritises worker interests relative to those of capital in its authoritarian rule.

PART 3

Methodological and Conceptual Aspects



On the Road to Global Labour History – via Comparison

Peter Alexander

Introduction

Marcel's great achievement has been to define and champion Global Labour History. He has helped elevate the status of scholarship on non-Western workers, opened debate around the meaning of 'working class' and extended the field's frontiers, both back in time and beyond waged labour. His critique of methodological nationalism has encouraged the development of pre-national, colonial and transnational research, and expanding the boundaries, concepts and methodologies of labour history has furthered the cause of inter-disciplinary dialogue, yielding fruitful exchanges with social scientists and archaeologists in particular. In South Africa we benefitted from his solidarity, notably through keynote addresses to conferences held in 2006 and 2008.¹ Intellectual leadership and the practical tasks of promoting research by Southern scholars has been matched by unsurpassed breadth of knowledge, as reflected in the bibliography of his 2008 *Workers of the World*, which runs to 75 pages.²

One of the streams that trickled into the river of Global Labour History was the Seminar on International Labour and Working-Class History, convened by Rick Halpern and others at the University of London from 1991 onwards (I joined it in 1992 on return from dissertation fieldwork in South Africa). For me the seminar was formative, cultivating a taste for comparative labour history.³ In 1993 Marcel flew across from Amsterdam to give us a paper on syndicalism,

1 The first had the theme 'Rethinking Worlds of Labour: Labour History in International Context'. The second, on 'Labour Crossings: World, Work and History', was backed by three international organisations, and researchers from four continents presented papers. Both conferences led to special issues of *African Studies*, respectively Bonner, Hyslop and van der Walt 2007a and Alexander et al. 2009. The former of these included an essay by Marcel on Global Labour History (van der Linden 2007).

2 Van der Linden 2008.

3 Subsequent collaboration between Rick and me included two comparative conferences on race and labour and three published collections (Alexander et al. 1997; Alexander and Halpern 2000; Alexander et al 2004).

and this was the first occasion that we met face to face. From then onwards, through many engagements, he has provided considerable inspiration.⁴

George Fredrickson, the doyen of comparative historians, explained himself as follows: 'I cannot remember a time when I did not take a comparative approach to almost everything I was thinking seriously about. I instinctively assimilate new experience by first asking what familiar thing it resembles and then how it differs. Everyone does it to some extent, but in my case the urge to compare things may be especially intense and possibly a bit obsessive'.⁵ I sympathise with that obsession.

In my view, comparison ought to be a pivotal component of Global Labour History. More cross-national comparative studies would strengthen the field, yet too often students and scholars hold back because they are uncertain about what they are letting themselves in for. This chapter attempts to puncture this diffidence. It does so by reflecting on six essays of my own.⁶ Writing about one's work is awkward, not only because it is inevitably self-indulgent, but also because it exposes more than is comfortable – and, in truth, one of the essays was a flop, never appearing in a peer-reviewed publication. However, having conducted research in, and written about, seven countries, hopefully I have learnt something. The purpose of the exercise is threefold:

- To give concrete expression to what it means to do comparative labour history, conveying something of its value.
- To draw methodological and practical lessons from the experience.
- To pave the way for three concluding comments.

Six Essays

1 *South Africa and the United States in the Era of World War Two*⁷

This first essay was a relatively straightforward exercise. I combined a reading of US secondary literature with what I knew about South Africa, drawn mainly

4 One project we worked on together was a very stimulating international workshop on 'What is the Working Class?', held in Amsterdam, which produced excellent papers and very stimulating discussion, but, alas, because of other priorities, none of this was published.

5 Fredrickson 1997, p. 2.

6 The chapter is based on an unpublished keynote lecture entitled 'Comparison, Transdisciplinarity and Transnationalism in Global History' presented to the Global Labour Summer School, held at the University of Toronto in 2008. This event was organised by Rick Halpern.

7 Alexander 1997.

from my doctoral dissertation. This led to the development of four sections: Economy and Society; Labour and the State; Strikes; Pay and Union Growth; and Egalitarianism and War. The comparators were contrasted within these themes, with similarities and differences identified. Differences that interested me were tentatively explained by reference to other differences, with attempts made to consider other possible explanations.

The extent of the similarities was striking: economic expansion; the creation of a new working class; inflation; a high level of strikes; unionisation and radicalisation, with positive implications for inter-racial co-operation, post-war reaction and so forth. The war had created similar dynamics in both countries. I could have extended this argument to other countries, but lacked the confidence and time, and was satisfied with contributing to the theme of the conference and the follow-up book for which it was prepared: *Against Exceptionalism!*⁸

I was also interested in differences. The most significant of these concerned state policy and race. Whereas the US government passed an Executive Order banning racist hiring of labour, South Africa promulgated a War Measure reinforcing racial division and discrimination. Interestingly, on the side of labour, there was a serious move in South Africa to establish a body modelled on the Congress of Industrial Organizations – a nice example of trans-national connection – but this failed. I suggested that these contrasts were rooted, first, in differences related to the mining industries and to the predominance of the latter over manufacturing in South Africa, and, secondly, to dissimilarity in the role and class character of the two states as these emerged from the two great modernising revolutions, the US Civil War and South Africa's Anglo-Boer War. But I was content to leave matters there, later exploring the race/class theme in my second paper.

Actually, for me, the most valuable part of the exercise was a gap it exposed in my understanding of South Africa. This is a process sometimes described as 'holding up a mirror' to reflect on one's own work. I looked in the mirror of US labour history and saw that I had missed something fundamental in South Africa. The wars brought in a whole new generation of workers. Partly through economic expansion and partly because of white men joining the army, demographics of labour changed dramatically, becoming considerably blacker and more feminine, with also, in the US case, the addition of white men migrating from rural areas. This new generation lacked the same loyalty to established unions as that of older white men, and it was far less committed to

8 Halpern and Morris (eds.) 1997.

the pro-war and anti-strike stance espoused by most union leaders (including those aligned to the communist parties). Frustrated by poor conditions and inflation, it was these recently-arrived workers who were central to the upsurge in militancy that occurred in South Africa, as well as the United States. Similar processes were occurring elsewhere in the world. In South Africa, it led to improved living standards and reduced profit rates, followed by an attack on white and black workers, which fed the rise of the pro-apartheid Nationalist Party.⁹

2 *Transvaal and Alabama, 1920–22*¹⁰

The second project was more substantial. It involved a comparison between coal miners in the Transvaal and in Alabama in the period 1920–22. The comparators were carefully chosen. I was, and remain, interested in South Africa's coal industry, rather than the gold industry, because although smaller and less significant in terms of South African history, it offers better possibilities for international comparison. At the same time, it is an important industry largely unexplored by historians, and – because it is so closely related to gold mining – it provides valuable glimpses of powerful dynamics that also affect that industry.¹¹ In terms of understanding race and labour, Alabama was an obvious pairing, one selected by other comparativists.¹² But there were additional factors: the coal industries were roughly the same age and size, based on similar production techniques, and both supplied the bulk of their output to a regionally dominant industry – steel in one case, gold in the other. Also, the two sites were compared at the same moment in time, when, as elsewhere in the world, wartime gains for workers were being countered by a ruling-class offensive.

I want to make two general points here. First, the choice of comparison should be dictated by the phenomenon you want to investigate – race and labour in this instance. This is easier said than done and it can take quite a bit of reading and thought before one formulates a question. Secondly, comparative history requires comparators that are similar. An orange from Spain and an orange from South Africa are better than an orange and a lemon, and the temptation to go for an orange and an apple should be avoided. The reason is simple: in attempting to identify the causes of difference, one wants to focus on as few variables as possible – the greater the number of possible explanations,

9 Alexander 2000, pp. 188–226.

10 Alexander 2004.

11 The Natal coal industry is better covered than that in the Transvaal, mainly because of the work of Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest (cf. Edgecombe and Guest 1987).

12 Cf. Fredrickson 1981 and Worger 2004.

the greater the chance of making mistakes. It is instructive that Fredrickson's major works, *White Supremacy* and *Black Liberation*, cover single subjects, but do so through a series of essays defined largely by similar themes that emerged in the histories of both countries.¹³

The relative tightness of my focus was dictated by a desire to work from primary sources. This followed an observation by Shula Marks – the leading historian of South Africa, and a tremendous supporter of Rick and indeed me – that earlier comparisons of the US South and South Africa, by Fredrickson and others, had suffered from unevenness in the quantity and quality of the secondary literature (much stronger for the United States than South Africa).¹⁴ Extensive primary research made the whole exercise far more time-consuming: six months conducting fieldwork in the US, six months in South Africa and another twelve reading, writing, chatting and thinking to produce only one comparative article and a couple of other papers. For me, the process was a great adventure, but it is debatable whether resources were wisely used – and there are other ways of doing comparative research.

One issue to emerge concerned the quantity and quality of the archival sources. This has broad ramifications for the kind of questions we ask and the analyses we advance, not just implications for my own project. This time South Africa comes out on top. South Africanists are enormously fortunate (though they rarely recognise this). We have depots full of relevant documents, including a good deal of important correspondence between key bureaucrats, but US archivists were far more selective and valuable material was destroyed.¹⁵ However, at least for labour history, there is a more fundamental issue. The contrast reflects, first and foremost, differences in the character of the two states, with the US being far less interventionist in labour relations (though this needs to be periodised and we should distinguish between different tiers of the state in a way that is unnecessary in South Africa).

I want to pursue this a little further. While it may be true that South African labour historians are overly state-centric, my impression is that, in general, US labour history in recent times has paid inadequate attention to the federal state's role in shaping labour history. There are, I think, a number of reasons for this, beyond the character of the sources, but first let me provide an example.

13 Fredrickson 1981, Fredrickson 1995.

14 Marks 1987. See Greenberg 1980, Fredrickson 1981, Cell 1982. Fredrickson (Frederickson 1997, p. 12) later acknowledged that comparative history could 'be based mainly on primary sources if the units [of comparison] are small enough'.

15 I have also worked on state archives in India and the UK, and, again, found that South Africa retains relatively more documents.

It is one that relates to Brian Kelly's prize-winning *Alabama Coalfields*. This is an excellent book, but Kelly missed the important point that the defeated 1920–21 strike was a continuation of the national 1919 strike, with the demise in Alabama foreshadowing decline elsewhere.¹⁶ In my view the lacuna was a consequence of inadequate attention to the state and to national dynamics. How does this kind of thing happen? First, there is an issue raised by Fredrickson that the new labour history of the 1980s and 1990s was strongly influenced by the social history of the 1970s and 1980s, which placed a strong emphasis on micro studies of workers' lives and eschewed engagement with the macro analysis tied to economic and political history.¹⁷ Secondly, I think there is an issue of scale. Compared to South Africa, the US is huge – the same may be said of India and China – and it becomes more difficult to visualise the state, especially for students with limited time to complete their dissertation. Thirdly, university specialisation and publishers' lists that divide history along national lines militate against cross-national history.

Returning to my second paper, comparative research made it possible to isolate and then explain critical dissimilarities in terms of race and labour. The gap between black and white was qualitatively different in the two countries, producing a bi-racial union in Alabama and a segregated union and a whites-only strike in the Transvaal. My explanation of this gap was layered. There was already a tradition of bi-racial union organising in the South, but not in South Africa. There was social segregation in Alabama, but social and economic segregation in the Transvaal, with blacks receiving a tenth the pay of white workers. In Alabama, blacks and whites came from broadly similar rural backgrounds, but this was not the case in the Transvaal. Workers in Alabama were free to move elsewhere if conditions became too bad, but black workers in the Transvaal were induced or compelled to work, recruited by labour monopsonies, forced to accept the same conditions wherever they were employed, and restricted by pass laws. In the US, capital was broadly competitive, but in South Africa capital was highly concentrated and marketing was cartelised. In contrast to the US, in South Africa the state was very interventionist, at least once British rule had been established. Behind all this, yet again, was the outcome of the two modernising revolutions. In the US, Northern victory was accomplished through support from black slaves and this led to a state founded on free labour, but in the Anglo-Boer war, blacks played a marginal role and the outcome was a merging of British and Boer interests at the expense of black people.

16 Kelly 2001.

17 Fredrickson 1995, p. 604.

Before moving on, I wish to make a further detour. Comparative cross-national comparative history should be distinguished from transnational history concerned with individuals, organisations and processes that move across borders. Both are necessary parts of the broader project of advancing a Global Labour History that is profoundly sceptical of national explanations (while not ignoring national dynamics).¹⁸ The classic transnational labour history is Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh's *Many Headed Hydra* about Atlantic sailors from different countries, some of whom were slaves, who constituted an early, if not the first, working class.¹⁹ There are also excellent studies by South African writers.²⁰ Transnational history can sometimes yield valuable comparative insights, in part because connections provide us with, so to speak, two oranges from the same tree.

Likewise, comparative history can reveal previously unknown transnational connections. There is a good example of the latter in the present case. Having attended a meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO), William Gemmill, labour adviser to South Africa's Chamber of Mines, travelled to the US where he witnessed the 1919 miners' strike. On his return to South Africa he wrote up his analysis and distributed it to mine owners, effectively agitating for the conflict that would occur in 1922. Offering three models – the European, the British and the North American – he argued that the last of these was most appropriate to South Africa, where, unlike Europe, there was no immediate danger of communism and, unlike Britain, the working class was in the minority. He noted the presence in the US of large bodies of unskilled foreign workers which tended to limit the influence of organised labour. He concluded that a defensive posture from capital would serve to encourage union organisation. The implication was clear.

3 *Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa*²¹

The third paper only requires a brief mention, since its thesis did not work and I withdrew it from publication. The idea driving the project was that, in terms of labour and political change, there were strong similarities between Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The suggestion was that Zimbabwe could

18 Bonner, Hyslop and van der Walt 2007b. Along similar lines, van der Linden (van der Linden 2008, p. 7) wrote: 'the existence of nation-states obviously remains an essential aspect of the world system. But it is an aspect which needs to be thoroughly historicized and relativized vis-a-vis sub-national, supra-national and trans-national aspects'.

19 Linebaugh and Rediker 2000.

20 E.g. Hyslop 1999, van der Walt 2007. See also Bonner, Hyslop and van der Walt 2007a.

21 Alexander 2002.

expect to see a new labour-led government in the near future, with this being more radical than the Movement for Multi-party Democracy government in Zambia. At the time – I was writing in 2002 – the idea was not absurd, because Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change had fared well in the 2000 election (possibly winning a majority of the votes). I further conjectured that a similar change would soon occur in South Africa, where the shift leftwards would be greater still, mainly because the social weight of the working class was more substantial. Clearly I was over-optimistic, underestimating the impact of Robert Mugabe's repression in Zimbabwe and the ideological influence of the Communist Party in South Africa.

General Jan Smuts, the South African Prime Minister, once commented that he was pleased his son was on the losing side at the Battle of Tobruk in 1941, because, he reasoned, one learns more from defeats than victories. So what did I learn from my small defeat? First, do not force a comparison by exaggerating similarities and always search for contradictory evidence. Second, be less ambitious about the number of comparators one analyses simultaneously. It is not a coincidence that the one of my six studies that failed to produce a publication was this. The historian's inductive logic and interest in the particular mean that comparing two cases is pretty tough. Comparing a third may only mean 50 percent extra research, but it takes us from one comparison to three (A with B, B with C and C with A). Moving to four cases takes us to six comparisons, producing analysis and written representation that is unmanageable. For a social scientist working with deductive logic, the situation is different. Then one can start with a proposition and test and modify it on the basis of the cases considered.²² This was how Stanley Greenberg wrote his *Race and State in Capitalist Development*, though even this was primarily a comparison of South Africa and Alabama, with Israel and Northern Ireland tacked on at the end.²³ My strong advice to any students who might be contemplating a comparative project – at least in history – is to stick to two cases.

4 *Natal and Transvaal, 1890–1950*²⁴

The fourth paper was a little different in that, by comparing the coal industries of Natal and South Africa, it was looking at one country (except that before 1900 the Transvaal was independent of colonial rule). I have been focusing on cross-national study because of its more direct relationship to Global Labour History,

22 See the discussion in Skocpol and Somers 1980.

23 Greenberg 1980.

24 Alexander 2008.

but there have been some excellent intra-national studies. I can recommend, in particular, Ron Lewis's book on race and labour in three different US states and Andrew Strouthous's account of labour politics in three of the country's cities.²⁵ In my case, the analysis highlighted a contrast between, on the one hand, what one might call the industrial history (including geology, markets, ownership, and organisation), and, on the other, the labour history (including the labour process, conditions of employment, collective mobilisation and racial divisions). For the period in question – that is, from the beginning of commercial mining until 1950 – the former was marked by difference and separation, and the latter by similarity and even linkages between unions organising across the provincial border. There has been a tendency to exaggerate the significance of this boundary and labour historians can be criticised for methodological provincialism.²⁶

Specifically, this particular study underlined my contention that migrant labour was not the only means of making a success of capitalism in South Africa. The development of the 'cheap-labour' system was a product, at least initially, of political concerns about maintaining order – of preventing urban areas from being over-run by 'detribalised natives' – rather than a consequence of economic imperative. In Natal it was estimated that by 1938 'some 65 percent of the labour force of the major ... collieries consisted of permanent labourers who, together with their families, viewed the collieries as "home"', and in the Transvaal, by 1924, some 25 percent of the black mine workers were living on or around the mines with their 'wives'.²⁷ These findings not only confounded the cheap-labour thesis, they also ran counter to the dominant view within social history that mine workers were essentially rural men, yearning for a return to their family life and their cattle.²⁸

5 *Pass laws in South Africa and China*²⁹

Methodologically, the last two papers are of greater interest. My fifth example is a study on China and South Africa co-authored with Anita Chan, a Chinese scholar now based in Australia. No doubt collaborative efforts can go wrong,

25 Lewis 1987, Strouthous 2000.

26 This is an argument for transnational labour history. International borders are often less important for workers than for political elites. This point is made in relation to Kerala by Menon (Menon 2004, pp. 498–501), where, in their imaginings, subalterns looked to the sea while the elite focused on the land.

27 The quote about Natal comes from Edgecombe and Guest 1987, p. 59.

28 Wolpe 1972, Moodie 1994, p. 21.

29 Alexander and Chan 2004.

but this was a most enjoyable experience, partly, I am sure, because as activists we had shared experiences, and partly because we were well balanced. While we both read secondary literature on each other's country, Anita provided the serious knowledge of China and I did the same for South Africa. At our peak, she would work on a draft for 12 hours, then I would do the next 12 – globalisation of labour history at its best. Working in this way, a publication was produced in a relatively short time.

Anita had commented that the Chinese system of Household Registration (*hukou*), in its contemporary incarnation, seemed remarkably similar to South Africa's apartheid pass laws. Our research largely supported this contention.³⁰ In South Africa, pass laws were used to police the migrant labour system, ensuring that workers who were not required on the mines or in urban areas were forced to return to rural homes. Employers could avoid paying many of the costs of reproduction, and were thus able to accumulate more capital. The same happened in China. Employers took advantage of relatively cheap peasant labour and the state had a means of controlling urbanisation. The argument has political significance. In South Africa, for instance, there had been some support for a Chinese road to capitalist development and it was possible to respond by saying: one, China's success has been based on the kind of apartheid-style pass laws that people died fighting against, and, two, South Africa's economy no longer has the kind of peasantry that lies at the base of China's achievement. On the Chinese side, the association with apartheid helped highlight the oppressive essence of *hukou*.

Our analysis proceeded using what Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, crediting John Stuart Mill, called the 'method of agreement'.³¹ With this approach, one identifies a phenomenon that is similar in two societies that are otherwise very different. Because there are few similarities, the number of factors, independent variables, that could explain the phenomenon in question, the dependent variable, is substantially reduced. In this instance, we narrowed the independent variables down to: 1) relatively simple techniques of production that did not require a stable, fully proletarianised work force; 2) substantial differences between urban and rural incomes; plus, because these two considerations exist in other countries, 3) states that are 'strong' enough to enforce the legislation.

We then considered differences between the two cases. Here the most significant was that the South African pass system was based on race. In theory some

30 The *hukou* and pass laws played different roles in earlier times.

31 Skocpol and Somers 1980, p. 183.

blacks – such as chiefs and higher professionals, including university academics – were exempt from carrying a pass, and many more had a right of domicile in an urban area, but in practice all blacks were subject to pass law harassment. This created the basis for an African identity and African mobilisation that was central to the general struggle against apartheid and to the abandonment of pass laws in 1986. While we could explain the end of pass laws in South Africa, we did not predict the way their significance in China has slowly diminished. I do not know enough to assess this latter change, but suspect it is a consequence of both economic and political factors.

In passing, it is worth noting that this China/South Africa comparison is diachronic. There are dynamics that affect the world at pretty much the same time – world wars and economic crises being two of the most important – and these create a basis for synchronic comparison. The studies of the US and South Africa are good illustrations. At the other extreme, different parts of the world have experienced similar political transformations, sometimes centuries apart in time. Modernising revolutions are an important example. In between these poles there have been other processes, such as urbanisation, that are diachronic but separated by less time. This China/South Africa comparison is a case in point.³²

6 *Women in South Africa and India*³³

My sixth and final example is a paper on the employment of women in underground work in India and South Africa. But, you might say, no women worked underground in South African mines (whether gold or coal)! Here a further advantage of comparative history is raised – its potential to address counterfactual questions. I wanted to know why women were not employed underground on South African coal mines (until 1996 that is).³⁴ So I decided to look at India, where there was a coal industry of similar age and size, and which also existed within the British empire. The Indian industry did employ women, lots of them, about 40 percent of the coal-mining workforce in 1920. Here the ‘method of difference’, rather than the ‘method of agreement’, was deployed. In contrast to the China study, the comparison was in the form of x/not x. As with the Alabama and Transvaal project, the context was one of multiple similarities, and we had to hunt for a causally significant independent variable, or variables, which was present in the one case but not the other.

³² See Alexander and Halpern 2004, pp. 5–18.

³³ Alexander 2007.

³⁴ I was drawn to this study by the presence of lots of similarities between the two industries, and it took me quite a while to identify the question.

My argument was that the most important such factor was mechanisation. By 1920 82 percent of the Transvaal's coal was machine cut – probably more than anywhere in the world. By contrast, even ten years later only 11.3 percent of Indian mines had coal-cutting machines. In the Indian mines, production was mostly based on family units, pretty much as it was with agricultural production. For parts of the year, heavy rain and lack of investment in pumps meant that mines were unworkable, and at these times the mineworkers were free to work on their land. The Indian government legislated against the employment of women underground in 1929, having already prohibited child labour. Something had changed in the mid-1920s. Certainly political campaigning was a factor, but this was not new. The key issue was that larger mines, those beginning to electrify and mechanise, required a disciplined labour force available for work throughout the year. These mines had halted or substantially reduced the employment of women, and statutory exclusion would benefit them by hurting competitors still dependent on their employment. The argument was not that machines replaced women in a direct sense (indeed cutting coal was regarded as men's work); rather, the replacement of women was part of an attack on family labour, which retained a degree of autonomy, and part of a process of developing modern labour practices. It was often the recruitment of migrant workers – under a system akin to that in South Africa – that made it possible for employers to transform their mines.

In South Africa there was legislation that excluded women, but the earliest I have found dates to 1898 and I cannot locate any discussion as to why the ban was introduced. One would be surprised if the statutory exclusion of women that existed in Britain and elsewhere in Europe and North America was not a factor. What we do know is that, almost from the start, South Africa's coal mines were relatively large and modern. It was neither desirable nor necessary to employ family units, partly because there were other options, notably the recruitment of migrant male workers.

Having brought this analysis to the fore, it was then possible to extend it into a wider theorisation.³⁵ Here I was assisted by the publication of two new collections on women miners.³⁶ What emerged was a model that helped explain bans on female underground work, which spread from Britain in 1842 through Germany in 1878, Ontario in 1890 and Russia after the 1917 Revolution. It eventually reached Japan in 1933 and the ILO in 1935. First, there was a pre-modern phase, where production was simple and owners got labour from

35 Alexander 2008.

36 Gier and Mercier 2006, Lahiri-Dutt and Macintyre 2006.

nearby, which usually meant the kind of family units that had worked the land, and often still did. This was replaced by modern methods that excluded women. Then, starting with a 1977 judgment in the United States, there was a move towards the employment of women once again. The use of automated cutting machines facilitated this shift and took us into what might be termed a post-modern phase of coal mining.

Conclusions

My six cases are complete. Now for my three conclusions. These cover the centrality of the state, the benefits of comparative history and interdisciplinary research.

Conclusion one. For me, there is a significant generalisation that emerges from these cases: one cannot understand labour history without considering the role of the state. First, the state has played a critical role in the supply of labour, especially in earlier phases of capitalist development. This is evident in the support for various forms of compulsion – slavery, convict labour, indenture, and the migrant-labour system in South Africa. It also provided a helping hand in obtaining labour of the right kind, by, for instance, institutionalising a differentiated labour force in South Africa and China and by processing immigrant workers in the US. Secondly, it can act in support of capital accumulation by providing forces of repression. There are many examples here, mostly associated with suppression of strikes but, in the case of China, extending to hostility towards independent unions. Yet there have been moments when the state has been more sympathetic, when it saw value in co-operating with union leaders – this was especially true in the US during the two world wars.

However, it would be wrong to offer a purely state-centric summation. Other dynamics are at work and one needs to understand the way in which the balance of social forces has produced different kinds of states in the various countries and led to changes over time. In South Africa, where the economy was dominated by a few mining houses, the state has worked closely with capital, though, as a powerful centralised power in its own right, it has often done so independently of narrow capitalist interests. In China, the Communist Party built a highly centralised state with a massive bureaucracy, which has been enormously successful in creating conditions for capital accumulation, partly by developing effective means of restricting public dissatisfaction (amongst all classes, but especially workers). In the US and India, economic and political power were more diffuse and the state has tended to be less interventionist than in South Africa and China. Everywhere there have been shifts, as we saw

with women working underground on the mines in India and with the demise of pass laws in South Africa.

Conclusion two. The cases have revealed some of the benefits of a comparative approach. First, pushing oneself to look for similarities is a wonderful antidote to exceptionalism. For a South Africanist there have been valuable lessons: Indian workers were paid less than black 'cheap labour' employed on South African mines, there were pass laws in China as well as South Africa, and the Second World War had a similar impact on labour organisation in the US as it did in South Africa. Second, by linking an account of differences with one of cross-national commonalities, comparative research can assist in distinguishing genuinely national dynamics from those erroneously regarded as such as a consequence of methodological bias. For instance, I am confident that 'race' in South Africa has special features derived from the unique character of the country's mining industry.

Third, comparative research can provide a mirror, enabling one to spot something absent in a primary study. For example, in looking at the US, I realised I had missed the significance of 'generation' in my South African analysis. Fourth, comparative research can reveal linkages not previously apparent. There were a number of examples, but Gemmill's report was particularly interesting. Fifth, it can be a way of posing and considering counterfactual questions. The absence of women from underground mining in South Africa was the case in point.

Sixth, comparative research can lead to hypotheses which can then be tested by further investigation, possibly by means of a different methodological approach, even perhaps by quantitative research. I was able to make tentative generalisations with regard to both pass laws and women, and this would not have been possible had my studies been confined to a single country.

Conclusion three. My final conclusion builds on this last point. Skocpol and Somers proposed what they called a 'cycle of transitions' – in effect a wheel with three spokes – which pinpointed the value of three kinds of comparative research and the potential relationship between each of them.³⁷ We could start anywhere on the wheel, but I'll begin with 'contrast oriented' research. This is the approach of the straight historian. It produces contrasts that suggest testable hypotheses, which can be considered by means of 'macro-causal' research, that is, attempts to grasp structural dynamics that operate in more than one time-defined place. Macro-causal research utilises the logics of 'method of agreement' and 'method of difference'. It can pave the way to a general the-

37 Skocpol and Somers 1980, p. 197.

ory testable by the third kind of comparative research, 'parallel demonstration'. This sets limits to overly general theory and can encourage the detailed work associated with 'contrast oriented research'. One project might deploy all three kinds of research, but there is a tendency to work with one or two. Macro-causal research is the mainstay of historical sociology, such as Skocpol's seminal *States and Social Revolutions*.³⁸ Parallel demonstration is common in development studies and sometimes political studies, where case studies are deployed to qualify theory. In the South African context, one writer identified the three approaches with, respectively, Fredrickson, John Cell and Greenberg. Let us see what Fredrickson has to say about this.

In 1985 Fredrickson distinguished between a 'historicist' and a 'structuralist' approach to comparative history. While the former emphasised difference and particularity, the latter aimed at developing macro-causal analysis. He stressed what he calls 'the gulf between the two methods', presenting himself as a defender of historicist comparison. Writing a second paper ten years later, Fredrickson rejected this simple dichotomy, arguing instead for a middle ground that, he said, 'combines elements of cultural contrast and structural analysis'.³⁹ This is my position too. At least in the more sophisticated pieces described above – those on Alabama, China and India – I attempted to specify and explain both difference and similarity, with the former associated more with the particularity of the straight historian and the latter with the generality of the sociologist. A complete understanding requires us to grasp layers of explanation: those that are immediate, national and historical, and also those that are longer-term, international and sociological. A comparative history of the middle ground can assist us with both. In the process, it can set limits to generalisation and also to particularity.

However, this is not the only kind of scholarship we require. There is considerable merit in the more theoretical work that is Marcel's oeuvre. He is able to draw on literature that spans centuries and continents to unravel the meaning, complexity and applicability of key concepts like 'workers', 'free wage labourers', 'strikes' and 'unions'. I admire him for this. It is tough work. Unlike some scholars, he achieves his goals with clarity of exposition and with connections to actual history and the practice of historians. Global Labour History requires reconstruction and comparison, but it is the synthetic and theoretical work, such as Marcel's, that provide it with coherence and identity.

38 Skocpol 1979.

39 Fredrickson 1997, pp. 8–9. See also Fredrickson 1995. According to Fredrickson, the 1985 paper was presented to a conference at Northwestern University.

Let me end, as I started, with Fredrickson. He concluded his assessment of comparative cross-national history with a formulation that could be adapted to the notion of Global Labour History. 'It is possible', he said, 'to imagine the field as a coherent co-operative enterprise. It is not yet a single community of inquirers, but it is not too much to hope that it can someday become one'.⁴⁰ Marcel's seminal contribution has been to fashion a co-operative enterprise that has taken us further down the road to becoming a coherent community advancing Global Labour History.

40 Fredrickson 1997, p. 65.

Migration Research in a Global Perspective: Recent Developments*

Dirk Hoerder

Introduction

Migration history was, for a long time, Atlanto-centric and framed by traditional nation-state discourse: European migrants moved from a nation to an ethnic enclave, e.g. from Italy to a Little Italy in some US city. The emigration countries' nationalist historians would, usually, not mention emigrants – they were no longer part of the nation. (These historians would have had to question national identity constructs, had they taken into account the millions who left ...). US scholars began their stories at Ellis Island because, not familiar with migrants' language of birth, they could not study socialisation in the culture of origin. They did not even care to look at Angel Island, the entry gate or, more often, detention centre for migrants from Asian cultures. They called the border to Mexico a 'backdoor', a kind of servants' entry for 'brown' men and women.

They assumed that immigrants carried some kind of 'cultural baggage', to be dropped as soon as possible. The paradigmatic frame of interpretation was the so-called Chicago School of sociology's notion of 'dislocation' and, perhaps, dysfunctionality, as well as Harvard's Oscar Handlin's notion of 'uprootedness'.

Since the 1970s, the field has come a long way and migration history became interdisciplinary migration research or migration studies.¹ A brief retrospect will connect the 1970s developments to earlier approaches marginalised in scholars' memory. The dislocation-uprootedness paradigm fit the preconceptions of the public and of politicians, but also of scholars socialised in such discourses. Researchers, however, could have recognised differentiated earlier approaches.

Research conducted at Columbia University from the 1890s to the 1930s and inspired by Franz Boas explicated the complexity of European, African,

* Translated by Ben Lewis, March 2014

1 For an outline of the field see Harzig, Hoerder and Gabaccia 2009, Chapter 2. A major anthology on migration theory is Lucassen and Lucassen (eds.) 1999. See also Brettell and Hollifield (eds.) 2007 and Brettell 2002, pp. 429–445.

African-Caribbean, and Mexican immigration – but Columbia's scholars were of Jewish faith, women, African-Americans, and Mexicans.² Out of it came – concerning transatlantic migrations – Caroline Ware's detailed social history of Greenwich Village, New York. This path-breaking work was not even cited by the Chicago and Harvard men.³ Furthermore, the Chicago men's sociology had been preceded by the Chicago Women's School of Sociology, whose results were subsequently downgraded to data collection and applied social work.⁴ In the 1930s and 1940s, sophisticated studies of acculturation and *métissage* analysed the creation of the transcultural Brazilian, Cuban, and Canadian societies. The gatekeeper-scholars in the Atlantic world's centres of knowledge production closed their minds to such authors.⁵ Empirical and theoretical work done from the 1880s to the 1910s by Ravenstein in England and von Randow and Caro in the Habsburg Empire was also hardly cited – the German Max Weber, in contrast, pronounced Poles in the Reich to be inferior. As regards the world outside the Atlantic's realm, early works on Asian migrations were published by Persia Campbell, Ta Chen, and Hugh Tinker, but they were also marginalised;⁶ studies on the forced migrations of African slaves were relegated to the separate sub-field of studies on slavery. Scholars who began to re-conceptualise approaches to migration in the 1970s and 1980s were, at first, prisoners of the provincial view that took the (white) European and the Atlantic segments of the world to be the norm. From the 1970s, detailed community studies of migrants, from the 1980s, vastly increased attention to other parts of the globe, whether in macro-regional or world-history perspectives, and from the 1990s, the study of global interactions have changed the field.

In this brief survey, terminologies and conceptualisations – including agency and gender – will be addressed first and macro-regional migration systems and social spaces of migration second. Next, some of the many recent publications will be mentioned. Reflections on changes in global migrations at the beginning of the twenty-first century and, thus, changing research needs, especially the shift to the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China), as well as the migratory consequences of the global crisis, will conclude this essay.

2 For a detailed study, see Hoerder 2015.

3 Ware 1935.

4 Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998.

5 Works by Gilberto Freyre, Fernando Ortiz, and Helen MacGill Hughes and Everett Hughes.

6 Campbell 1923; Chen 1923; Tinker 1974.

1 Terminologies and Conceptualisations: Forced and Free Migration, Gender and Agency

In global approaches to migration, traditional terminology juxtaposed emigration to immigration and, occasionally, added 'coolie' migrations and other mobilities. Misleading naming of social phenomena prevents questions being asked, hypotheses being formulated, and even data being collected. As regards data, the label 'immigration' country for the US prevented collection of information on circular and return migration – around 1900 one-third of the 'immigrants' returned to Europe, were temporary migrants or 'guest workers', to use another problem-laden term. The gender ideology-based assumption that women were 'associational' to or 'dependent' upon men prevented collection of data on women – 40 percent of the transatlantic migrants were female. Slaves, 'coolies' and forced labourers under fascism, Stalinism, apartheid or other regimes, not having migrated of their own will, were considered 'passive' and slotted into different research approaches and sub-disciplines.

Imperial personnel in colonised regions, on the other hand, such as powerful agents of the Roman, British, or Chinese empires, were considered stationary rulers, although all of them were migrants. 'Migration', as a neutral term, comprises single and multiple moves; uni- and multi-directional ones; circular, return, reverse, and stepwise moves; seasonal, temporary, multi-annual, and permanent ones. The latter may be unintentionally permanent – migrants who always planned to return but never did – or involuntarily permanent – return was desired but not possible. Inclusion of migrant agency – in structural frames and economic options or constraints – differentiates impersonal 'flows' or 'streams' of migrants and reveals the complexities of mobility. One attempt to arrive at a standardised definition of a migrant posits that a person must have lived away from his/her previous place of residence (not: place of birth) for a year or more. But this time-frame is no more than a heuristic device for data collection. Travels in the past, e.g. across the Tsarist Empire, may have taken years and thus, like migration, may have had acculturating effects; merchant families in the early modern Mediterranean and nineteenth-century Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora have been said to be temporary migrants, although they might stay for two or more generations.

When the forced migrations to which African slaves, Asian indentured labourers, Ostarbeiter, and others were subjected became part of migration research, the juxtaposition of free and forced seemed self-evident. But these categories involved insidious connotations and imposed restraints on analyses. First, slaves and other forced worker-migrants were considered passive – they 'naturally' cannot become masters (or mistresses) of their own lives; 'cool-

ies', in the same frame of reference, were said to be depraved and in need of control. Thus a forced labour regime, the systemic pacifying of a labour force by exploiters, was changed terminologically and implicitly into a character trait of the (black, brown, yellow) victims of the system. In contrast, free migrants – implicitly European and white – were assumed to be active and, given their ascribed capabilities, of superior culture. This passive-active juxtaposition made racialisation part of migration discourses and research. Second, as to the 'free' white migrants: European men and women left economies that did not provide for subsistence as well as hierarchical societies that precluded betterment for the lower classes. From the point of view of life projects or even survival, they were disaster zones. Thus men and women left under extreme constraints; they were 'self-willed' only to the degree that a decision could be made as to who would leave. In addition, until the 1820s, more than half of transatlantic migrants were too poor to pay their passage and had to indenture themselves, i.e. bind themselves to someone who paid their passage. Analyses require inclusion of the structural constraints of Europe's societies, as well as of the agency of enslaved men and women who rebuilt their lives under conditions of bondage. All of these newcomers built the societies of the Americas and sustained production in the global plantation belt. The degree of choice in departure – low, for example, for refugees – impacts the options to reconstruct lives in a society of arrival. Migrants who decide upon departure and choose a destination can prepare; forced labourers and refugees are cast about by impersonal warfare, expulsion, and labour regimes. They can neither prepare nor pro-act but have to re-act to power impositions and circumstances.⁷

As in much of history written by men, migrating women were subsumed under men, were made invisible or, as one scholar called it, were symbolically annihilated. Data on women's migrations have always been available but require critical reflection on sources. Statistics on crossings of international borders were collected by nation-state apparatuses, a gendered construction in itself: male officials socialised in gendered societies counted men and labelled women and children as 'dependents'. However, 'vital records' in migrants' local or regional communities of departure contain information about women and, for that matter, about family migration and departure of children.⁸ Employers of migrant workers, self-willed or bound, specified whether they needed a reservoir of male or female workers or both and whether they hired child labour.

7 This is discussed in more detail in Harzig, Hoerder and Gabaccia 2009.

8 This has been pointed out by Hahn 2008, pp. 18, 32–3, 157–244.

Women often developed their own migration routes and patterns of sequential migration. Globally, but depending on culture, labour markets, and duration of a migration flow, women accounted for one-half of all migrants in the nineteenth-century intra-European migrations,⁹ and in transatlantic ones since the 1930s. Before the 1930s, women accounted for about 40 percent of departures from Europe, in migrations of South Asian indentured workers, 1830s to 1930s, for 25 to 33 or more percent. Only in South Chinese migrations was the share of women small.¹⁰ The high visibility of women migrants since the 1990s has led to public debates and scholarly pronouncements of a 'feminisation of migration'. However, what has changed is that in present-day caregiver and domestic workers' migrations women leave first, are often married, leave children behind, and as personnel in middle-class homes – rather than being restricted to ethnic working-class quarters – they are highly visible because of skin colour. Increasingly women are the major breadwinners for their families.¹¹

Thus migration research, in becoming global, has questioned its gender and racial implications.

2 Migration Systems: Transnational or Translocal-Transregional-Transcultural

In common parlance, data collection, and much of research, migrants move between states: Poles to Germany, Indians to Britain, Chinese to Indonesia. However, both aggregated and disaggregated empirical data point to different socio-geographic scales of analysis: macro-regional migration systems and micro-regional, yet long-distance, migrant networks. The five major nineteenth-century migration systems comprised the Atlantic economies, the Chinese Southeast Asian diaspora, the plantation belt, the Russo-Siberian one, and the north-China-to-Manchuria one, as well as many smaller others; late twentieth-century migrations involve the oil-producing countries, Europe's so-called guest-worker system, Africa's sub-Saharan region, and numerous others,

9 Marlou Schrover, 'Feminization and Problematization of Migration: Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in Hoerder and Kaur (eds.) 2013.

10 To name only a few titles: Gabaccia 1989; Gabaccia 1994; Gabaccia and Iacovetta (eds.) 2002; Simon and Brettell 1986.

11 Harzig 2001, pp. 15–28.

large, mid-sized, or small. Parallel to these macro-regional systems, each and every migrant man or woman connected and connects a locality of origin and a locality of destination.

Migrants target specific local labour markets since they have to find an income-generating job immediately; they keep contacts and retain emotional ties with the family and community they have left behind, and not with some state or society as a whole. The state-centred approach has relevance as to exit regulations (if any) and, more importantly, as to entry barriers. Economic policies and private capitalist development also frame the need to depart from societies in which sustainable lives are not possible, or they attract potential migrants by providing options for life projects.

The state- or nation-centred approach received a new impetus in the early 1990s, when anthropologists took note of the cultural continuities that migrants establish across borders and conceptualised 'transnational' ties. This term was quickly adopted by researchers and became almost a catchword.¹² The 'trans' correctly emphasises the continuities in migrants' lives and critiques the dividing aspects of political borders – it thus fits well with the reconceptualisation of borders and borderlands. But the 'national' misrepresents the internal differentiation of nations and states. From a stateside perspective, women leaving the Philippines for caregiving work in Canada do carry Philippine passports and have to meet Canada's entry requirements, but they have been socialised in a particular place, a metropolis like Manila or some city, town, or village on another, smaller island. They also do not arrive in some construct of a generic Canada, but acculturate in a neighbourhood of Toronto, of a prairie town, or somewhere else. In Toronto they would find a community of earlier arrivals from their culture, in a northern Saskatchewan community they would be without community support.

The connection between place/community (space) of departure and space of arrival thus is translocal and, since local places are shaped by their immediate socio-economic environments, transregional. Given present mobility, connections may involve multiple spaces, several sequential places of arrival, as well as spaces where migrating friends live. In view of options in labour markets across the globe, 'glocal' connectivity is a useful conceptualisation. Research thus requires specific transcultural analyses rather than generalised structural and often constructed transnational/trans-state frames.¹³

12 Vertovec 2002, pp. 447–62.

13 Hoerder 2012, pp. 69–91.

On the macro-level, migration systems connect two or more distinct societies, each characterised by degree of industrialisation and urbanisation, by political structures and current policies, by specific educational, value, and belief systems, by ethnic composition and demographic factors (age structure, marriage patterns, dependency ratio), and by traditions of internal, medium-distance, and long-distance migrations. Migration systems involve clustered moves that continue over time (as distinct from non-clustered multidirectional migrations). Gross and net quantity of migration flows, continuity over time, and the ratio per 1,000 persons can be measured on this level; general push-and-pull-factors and state-wide admission regulations may be analysed. But for individual migrants, such data provide no more than the frame for making their life-course decision.¹⁴

Transculturation is the process in which individuals and societies change themselves by integrating (often, at first, only some aspects of) diverse cultural ways of life into dynamic new ones. Transcultural history, present societies, and individual lives imply that people, ideas, and institutions do not have clearly defined and bordered national identities. Rather, people and societies transport, transpose, translate, and assemble aspects of different cultures.

Culture is not distinctively Chinese or Algerian or other but aspects of it began/begin and ended/end somewhere else. Transcultural practices involve spoken and body language, arts and beliefs, tools and institutions. Migrants and societies create translocal and transregional transcultural spaces. Subsequent interactions and migrations will again change this new – and transitory – culture. Past research and present politics often overlook that migration – whether short-distance intra-regional or long-distance global – involves transculturation of societies as a whole rather than merely adaptation by the newcomers.¹⁵

3 Literature

The migration historiography emerged out of ethnic group history and labour history – and, like both fields, at first did not include the agency of women.

14 The concept of spatial 'migration systems' and the comprehensive economic-social-cultural 'systems approach' to factors inducing migration decisions has been developed by many scholars globally. Selected references by year of publication: Mangalam and Schwarzkeller 1968, pp. 3–18; Mabogunje 1970, pp. 1–18; Todaro 1976; Fawcett and Arnold 1987, pp. 453–73; Jackson and Moch 1989, pp. 27–36; Skeldon 1990, pp. 27–46; Kritiz, Lim and Zlotnik (eds.) 1992, pp. 1–16; Parnwell 1993.

15 Hoerder 2004, pp. 7–20.

When, under the impact of analyses by Anthony D. Smith, Benedict Anderson, Eric J. Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger, concepts of national (or ethnic) identities collapsed, studies of ethno-cultural groups, which assumed bordered identity groups, also came to a sudden end. Borderlines of cultural groups were reconceptualised as fuzzy and permeable.¹⁶ About a decade later, from the 1990s, new studies on transborder, transnational, and transcultural exchanges and *métissage*, fusion, and hybridity emerged. Of the latter, some followed a cultural studies jargon (like 'The Slave Business: Notes on a Hermeneutics of Absence and a Pedagogy of the Trace', on a place with no slaves); most provided thoughtful and empirically researched analyses of braided and entwined cultures emerging in processes of spatial mixing and interaction. More recent ones achieve this on a global scale, for example on Somali and Philippine domestic workers in Rome.¹⁷

This short survey will focus on studies of migration rather than of acculturation and *métissage*.¹⁸ Labour historians, like ethnic and national(ist) historians constrained by their socialisation in the frame of one state, focused on labour organisations and strikes, then on the working classes, and finally on working-class culture and working women. While Marxist historians assumed an internationally-minded proletariat with – in a simplified version – nothing to lose but its chains, ethnic historians pointed out that workers also have a culture to lose. An early compilation of sources on immigrant workers in the US and Canadian labour movements, however, noted that workers expressed themselves in their respective national cultural frames of reference even when conditions of exploitation were similar, and thus were internationally mobile but not internationally minded.¹⁹ This was not new: the Austrian socialists, Otto Bauer and Victor Adler in particular, had come to differentiated assessments of cultural specifics, the 'Nationalitätenfrage', around 1900. When decolonisation was being turned by capitalist neo-colonialism into a global zone of 'cheap labor' countries, the tension between cultural specifics and cross-cultural class aspects was reassessed: race, rather than ethnicity, was the marker of a new 'global apartheid', to use the term introduced by Canadian

16 Cohen 1995, pp. 35–62; Cohen 1995a, pp. 5–18.

17 Chell 1997, pp. 75–92.

18 An early, differentiated conceptualisation of immigrant acculturation emerged – like much of the scholarship on many-cultured and multicultural societies – in Canada. See Goldlust and Richmond 1974, pp. 193–225. For a differentiated concept of transnationalism see Faist 2000.

19 Hoerder 1987, pp. 1–47.

sociologist Anthony Richmond. Class and race motivate migration out of constraining circumstances.²⁰

In the late 1980s and early 1990s several early summaries of worldwide labour migrations appeared, emphasising issues of race and global power relations as well as class over ethnicity.²¹ Subsequent studies dealt with particular migratory movements, for example of Mexican or West African workers to more developed societies, i.e. societies providing jobs and better wages, albeit in the context of higher costs of living and racialising marginalisation.

To some degree, such migrations perpetuate but also subvert former colonial relationships. Labour migrants can use their human capital best if they target a country whose language they speak. Thus much of the migration from (formerly) French-language West and North Africa is directed to France, or from Haiti to Quebec. Such migrants remain exploitable but reverse racial segregation.

Increasingly, scholars – often outside of the knowledge production of the Atlantic World – studied rural-urban migrations into labour markets for unskilled workers within Africa, Latin America, and Asia rather than falling victim to the assumption that all migration is to highly developed countries. All studies accept the skilled/unskilled dichotomy of labour. However, migrants were skilled agriculturalists or small-town artisans before their departure.

At the destinations, they usually enter construction work or assembly-line production. For them migration involves a deskilling not reflected in the accepted juxtaposition of skilled and unskilled. From the mid-1990s, several scholars began to deal with global migrations as a whole or to fill gaps by studying macro-regions neglected in research. Robin Cohen edited a compendium of different types of migration across the world; I published a synopsis of global migration in the last millennium.²² This dismantling of the primacy of the Atlantic World's migrations and the projection of mobility back into the past have led to several new developments. Historians of the Middle Ages are now re-writing the history of territories and rulers as one of cultural exchange and migration.²³

This reconceptualisation is also emerging for other parts of the world and has been extended further into the past by noting that the 'Völkerwanderungen' were not migrations of culturally coherent groups but involved the mobility of

20 Richmond 1994.

21 Cohen 1987; Potts 1990; Harris 1995.

22 Cohen (ed.) 1995; Hoerder 2002. See also Gabaccia and Hoerder (eds.) 2011; Hoerder and Faires (eds.) 2011.

23 Borgolte 2009, pp. 261–285; Borgolte and Tischler (eds.) 2012.

peoples continuously constituting and reconstituting themselves.²⁴ Much of ancient history is also being re-written in terms of migration, acculturation, and interaction.

For the present, new quantitative studies – with emphasis on Latin America and China – have been pioneered by José Moya and Adam McKeown.²⁵ A comprehensive encyclopaedia of the state of the field is the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*,²⁶ and the global migration approach has been extended back in time to the emergence of humankind in East Africa by Patrick Manning.²⁷

As regards present-day labour migrations, the entry of women into academia and feminist scholarship have resulted in wide-ranging research on women in past migrations and on women's migrations from decolonised societies into the domestic work and caregiving sectors of societies in which families can afford low-wage migrant labour, but in which no local personnel is available for such poorly paid, yet demanding jobs. Academic pursuits remain heavily gendered – almost all studies on women's migration are undertaken by women while most men continue to focus on men's labour migrations. Some of these studies are global in dimension,²⁸ others deal with macro-regions like Latin America or Filipinas in the world;²⁹ more – too numerous to list – deal with particular regions of origin, Bangladesh for example, or specific destinations such as Hong Kong, Singapore, or the oil-producing economies of the Gulf of Hormuz. The studies do not only add women to the research agenda and introduce the neglected field of social reproduction; they also raise questions that require the reconceptualisation of unquestioned assumptions. If building a house, masonry and carpentry, is skilled labour, why is the raising of a child unskilled work? If many societies considered and consider mothers the prime agents of the inculcation of national values into infants and children, how does this change when the prime caregivers are migrant women of a different culture, colour of skin, and language? If such migrant caregivers work in the supposedly 'private' sphere of homes, how can public-private dichotomies and nation-vs.-ethnic ghetto clichés be revised?

24 Pohl (ed.) 1998; Pohl 2002.

25 Moya 2006, pp. 1–28; Moya and McKeown 2010, pp. 9–52; McKeown 2001; McKeown 2005, pp. 155–89; McKeown 2010, pp. 1–30.

26 Ness (ed.) 2013.

27 Manning 2005.

28 Anderson 2000.

29 Chaney and Castro (eds.) 1989; Parreñas 2001.

These topics and the literature cited reflect only a glimpse of the vast amount of literature on migration. Forced labour – one of Marcel van der Linden's topics – migration within India or Indonesia for example, and many other issues require attention.

4 **New Migrations: Research Needs in View of Global Shifts of Economic Power and Banker-induced Crises**

An assessment of an agenda of migration studies may begin from several different vantage points. Event history could emphasise the 9/11 (2001) terrorist destruction of New York's World Trade Centre towers, which killed 3,000 individual men and women, and the '9/11' (2008) self-destruction of the towering Western financial system based on derivative junk, which, according to 2009 ILO data, caused some 18 million men and women to lose their jobs and some 200 million in developing countries to be pushed from vulnerable into unsustainable lives.³⁰ Crises may slow down actual migration because those further impoverished lack the transaction costs for a move. But crises may also accelerate migrations: those with no options cross the Mediterranean into fortress Europe, or the US's new iron curtain on its southern border, or other 'impediments', to reach societies which (seem to) provide some options for survival. In Western thinking, it is acceptable that investors migrate to China to achieve higher returns on their capital, but it is not acceptable that common people migrate to 'richer' countries to achieve better returns on their human capital.

A process-approach would analyse the changing impact of globalisation. Often said to be recent, globalisation is in fact a development that dates at least from the fifteenth century:

- (1) a new level of global capitalism and financial institutions which, in a frame of global apartheid, have destabilising – i.e. for potential migrants literally unsettling – effects in low-income countries;
- (2) technological change that reduces the cost and time of long-distance transport;
- (3) worldwide political transformations such as de- and recolonisation;
- (4) the universalisation of human rights, which challenges the inferiorisation of minorities and migrants;

30 International Labour Organisation 2009; *The Guardian*, 19 August 2010, summarised an Oxfam 2010 Report as 'Poor Nations pay for bankers' greed'.

- (5) a rise of expectations among people in countries with low standards of living who, via TV and YouTube, literally live ‘in view’ of wealthy segments of the world;
- (6) changing global economic power relations that juxtapose fast developing societies such as China, India, Brazil, and Russia with regimes that institutionalise high levels of inequality, such as Mexico and India.

In such complexities, the nation-state gatekeepers’ postulated mono-cultural and essentialised national identities have little impact on the myriad of decisions to migrate. As in the past, migration appears as a counter-narrative to the nation; mobile life trajectories and multi-locality counter the bordered territoriality of unsatisfactory and unsafe – home? – states and unsustainable lives in them.³¹ A comprehensive analysis discerns an ongoing, deepening global crisis: in the mid-1990s, the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest countries of the globe, compared to 1960, had doubled: the richest 20 percent of the world’s population were almost 60 times better off than the poorest 20 percent – and the chasm continues to grow.³² In the decades after World War II and decolonisation, globalised Western capital imposed unequal terms of trade on (non-white) less developed and poorer countries, and intellectual gatekeepers like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, as well as parts of the mass media, replaced the Cold War’s systemic antagonism – a ‘free West’ vs. a communist ‘bloc’ – with a new, colour-of-skin-coded antagonism: a Christian vs. an Islamic world. Such ideologues, too monocultural to deal with diversity and multiple options, develop a new politics of identity. Is ‘Western’ identity so brittle, so vague, or so undefinable that a devilish alien Other – once witches and heretics, then communism, now multiculturalism, Mexicans, and Muslims – is needed to keep it from coming apart? Is an outside enemy the straitjacket that holds together societies, rather than internal achievement?³³

Much of the present migration – rather than from the Global South to the Global North – is taking place within the fast growing economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. In the course of mass migrations from marginal regions to production sites in China alone, some 200 million rural men and women have moved to cities where, however, they are usually not accorded residence rights.³⁴ As with European designations such as ‘vagrants’ or ‘itiner-

31 See, for example, Guarnizo and Smith (eds.) 1998.

32 Hoerder 2002, p. 516.

33 This argument is developed further in Hoerder n.d.

34 According to estimates, migration in the next 20 years will involve a further 350 million people.

ants', Chinese society's hostility to migrants is reflected in the naming: migrants are a 'floating population'. Parallel to the BRIC economies' migrations to jobs, 'deindustrialisation'-migrations occur from, for example, the US 'rust belt' and Detroit's automobile factories.

While migration studies have focused, for good reasons, on mass migration, a vast array of small-scale moves indicate new patterns and demand a new research agenda, perhaps even a basic change of perspective. Contrary to the media's and public opinion's focus on the poor of the world 'inundating' (allegedly) wealthy Western societies, many specialists are already reversing their direction of inquiry and leaving the stagnating 'West' for dynamic 'BRIC' and other societies. Unexpectedly, in-migration to 'the West' from 'developing' countries involves highly qualified experts, because (underfunded) 'Western education' fails to supply them. The most-cited case in point is that of software programmers migrating (often within the structures of global companies) from India to the Netherlands, the US, and other 'highly developed' economies.

While the Western press dealt with migrants as 'problems' in the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s and 1990s, a new awareness of migration has induced regular and differentiated reporting.³⁵

Whole sections of newspapers are devoted to 'Europeans who leave', 'French without borders', and the 'planet-wide nomadism of students'. Emigration from wealthy but stagnating countries to richer societies in Asia and elsewhere includes, for example, some 1.5 to 2.5 million French: art gallery owners, luxury hotel managers, *sommeliers*, and young people with degrees but no options.

Wealthy Chinese and Russians recruit English butlers and French wine experts.³⁶ Japan recruits highly qualified technicians to develop a new generation of automobiles; Uruguay recruits experts in many sectors. US Americans – once told: 'go west, young men' – now migrate east, with China as their destination. Press concentration in Western countries forces journalists to leave. University and technical school graduates leave Greece, Portugal, and Spain.

35 The following is based on a mere six-month period, January to June 2012, of reporting in *Le Monde*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, and *Courrier international*. It could be expanded by a reading of the British *Guardian*, The Canadian *Globe and Mail*, the international capitalist *Financial Times* and newspapers in Algeria, Lebanon and Nigeria. Interestingly, the US press continues its 'provincialising' of the US and hardly reports on global migrations. The topic has achieved prominence to a degree that TV or video programmes in several countries, Australia and Germany for example, as well as a large number of films, French co-productions in particular, deal with migration, including undocumented migrants and refugees, and acculturation-interaction after arrival.

36 In Japan, even a manga on wine and *sommeliers* has appeared: Shin Kibayashi / Yuko Kibayashi, *Kami No Shizuku* ['The Drops Of God'], 2004 ff.

Portugal – with the lowest level of schooling in the EU – encourages teachers, whom the state is unable to pay, to emigrate. Young Turkish-German men and women migrate to Turkey, where options for jobs and careers are better. Chinese immigrant small businesspeople depart the Greek economy. Russians with qualifications go to wherever in the world jobs are available – no previous migration paths channel them to communities of earlier migrants. Canada's and England's universities have to recruit fee-paying students from Asian societies. Young experts move from stagnant former coloniser societies to the dynamic economies of the former colonies/dependent economies: Portuguese experts move to Angola and Brazil, and Spanish experts to Brazil.

While India's institutions of higher education produce more specialists than the country's labour market can accommodate, other developing countries lose needed qualified personnel in brain and skill drains: (poorer) societies invest in the young generation's education and training, and other (richer) ones benefit from their skills and taxes. The Philippines face a shortage of doctors and nurses; the countries of the Maghreb lose their best-qualified young people to countries like France. Destinations provide jobs and better pay, but migration does also involve a critique of societies' structures: the selected destinations also offer options for life projects not restrained by hierarchical or fundamentalist social organisation.

A different category of migration is that of wealthy persons, who move their assets away from the societies in which they accumulated them. Wealthy Greeks buy real estate in Berlin and other capital cities, newly wealthy Bulgarians move to Vienna, Brazilians to Lisbon, Chinese from the PRC to Canada, and, recently, wealthy French to London and Switzerland, following the victory of the Socialist Party in the presidential election of June 2012. Within cities of both old industrialised and new BRIC countries, segments of the wealthy move from 'open society' into enclosed, 'gated' communities, thus increasing internal segmentation and segregation.

Labour migrations continue, but rather than coalescing into major migration systems, they have become highly diverse. In addition to technical personnel, unskilled workers are needed at often isolated sites of raw material extraction – northern Alberta oil sands, southern Patagonia oil drilling, Kazakhstan, mining sites in Africa. Workers for the three-D sector – dirty, dangerous, demeaning jobs – are moving from Senegal to France, from Taiwan to mainland China, from Somalia and Mexico to Minnesota chicken and meat factories. A new market for military labour – mercenaries – is developing: Africans for the US army and private war contractors, Nepalese Gurkhas for the British army. In the worst cases, traffickers circumvent the exclusionary entry regimes of labour-importing states and channel men and women without documents into

narrow segments of the labour market, where they remain bound to the traffickers until they pay off the high debts incurred.

This sector includes the trafficking of women into sex work against their will. A related market for women's bodies and emotions has developed in countries with selective abortion of female foetuses and resulting unbalanced sex ratios in the population. China and India import women; Myanmar women are sold into this trading system.

The largest labour migrations remain those from deprived rural areas in the BRIC countries – similar to those in the Asian 'tiger economies' from the 1960s to the 1980s and across the Atlantic from the 1880s to 1914 – to urban agglomerations and sites of mass production with miserable living conditions, such as for example the bidonvilles of Mumbai/Bombay or the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

By contrast, in African countries wracked by warlordism, like Somalia, or factional fighting, like Nigeria, large numbers of refugees are stacked away in camps and prevented from migrating. Multi-generational camp life was first imposed on the Palestinians by Israel, then on 'minority' peoples by right-wing, US-supported regimes in Central America – the infamous 'banana republics'. Such camps, and survival on the margins, proliferate in and around Afghanistan, Syria, the Congo RDC, Nigeria, and Mali, to name only a few. Of countries involved in long wars of decolonisation, Angola has become a migrant-attracting economy due to its oil wealth, while Algeria has become an emigration country due to its ossified political structures. In an increasing number of regions, refugee generation is a consequence of religious fundamentalism: people depart from regions taken over by Islamist Taliban and others, are deported from annexed territories by Jewish ultra-orthodox settlers, leave the US bible belt because of constraints on personal choice. The fundamentalists of the world have united.³⁷

Given the ever deepening global wealth gap, populations in segments of the world with high standards of living and their state apparatuses are contributing to hunger – a push factor for migration – in poorer segments. The EU's fishing fleets engage in mass 'harvesting' of fish and shrimp off West Africa's, Madagascar's, and India's coasts, depriving local populations of food and jobs. Garments for sale in the EU and US are produced, for example, at Thailand's western border by undocumented migrant women workers from Myanmar.

37 In addition, in several states across the globe religious and ethno-cultural minorities are targeted by repressive measures: the numerous non-Burmese peoples in Myanmar under military rule, recently Copts in Egypt and non-Magyars in Hungary.

They cannot feed their children from the wages paid but know how exquisitely Western consumers dress. While the production is organised by global capitalist conglomerates and local capitalist subcontractors, such migration-inducing exploitation cannot simply be blamed on an abstract 'capitalist system': the consumers have faces – usually white ones – and live mostly in high-income societies. Occasionally, migrant workers' faces also become visible: in February of 2004, undocumented Chinese cockle pickers working in England for a subcontractor of major British food chains were overtaken by the tide and 23 drowned. A documentary video recounts the life of Ai Qin, a young Chinese woman, who paid human smugglers 25,000 US dollars to get to Britain. Her goal was to earn enough money to provide food and education for her son. Rice – a major staple in China – and basic foods elsewhere have become financial products in futures trading and commodity speculation. People with low incomes can no longer feed themselves.³⁸ Research needs to combine global economic structures with specific worldwide migrations in translocal, transregional, and trans-state contexts.

Though migrants are essential for the economic and social functioning of (formerly?) highly developed societies, segments of the respective populations and media have developed an anti-immigrantism that resembles the past's anti-Semitism – pogroms, murder, and mass expulsions included. In the US, Mexicans are deported regardless of the political party in power; Israel's government deports Sudanese and other African immigrants without papers, a colour-of-skin-based racist policy. In addition to new analyses of global capitalism, migration researchers need to reflect on the impact of the new inequalities on societies as well as on individuals' lives.³⁹ The moral philosophy or moral economy of late eighteenth-century thinkers such as Adam Smith, or of nineteenth-century thinkers such as Karl Marx,⁴⁰ provides frames of reference for global migration studies.

38 Casciani 2004. '23 Lives. 23 Souls', by Nick Broomfield, 2007, 96 min; Ziegler 2012, p. 8.

39 Wilkinson and Pickett 2009.

40 Phillipson 2010; van der Linden and Roth (eds.) 2009.

Labour Flexibility and Labour Precariousness as Conceptual Tools for the Historical Study of the Interactions among Labour Relations*

Christian G. De Vito

Presentation

This essay seeks to highlight the potential of the concepts of labour flexibility and labour precariousness in developing the historical study of the interactions between ('free' and 'unfree') labour relations. At the same time, it highlights the impact of a global and long-term approach to labour flexibility and labour precariousness on the contemporary debate in this field. To this double aim, I define labour flexibility as the relative advantage attached by employers and policy-makers to certain labour relations, based on the opportunity to recruit, locate and manage workforces in the place, time and task most conducive to the former's own economic and political goals. In other words, labour flexibility expresses the employers' and policy-makers' quest to synchronise the availability of what they perceive as the most appropriate workforce, with their productive and political needs. In turn, labour precariousness is defined here as the workers' own perception of their (lack of) control over their labour power, in relation to other workers, the labour market, and the social reproduction of their workforce.

The relational nature of these definitions represents one of this essay's contributions to the debate on labour flexibility and labour precariousness in both historical studies and contemporary debates. Whereas many contra-

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dictory definitions of these phenomena exist in scholarship, those provided here have arguably the advantage of connecting labour flexibility/precariousness to the issue of control over labour: they indicate how labour flexibility relates to external (employers' and/or policy-makers') control over the workforce, whereas labour precariousness relates to workers' control over their own labour force. By foregrounding the question of control, and ultimately of power, these definitions additionally allow for a focus on the 'constraint agency'¹ of historical and contemporary actors at the crossroads of materiality and perceptions, external categorisation and self-representation.

My argument especially builds on the findings of two distinct streams in recent scholarly literature, to which Marcel van der Linden has contributed greatly: the re-conceptualisation of the role of multiple labour relations in the process of labour commodification, which has been proposed within the context of Global Labour History; and the studies that have addressed contemporary labour precariousness from a historical and global perspective. Starting from these new approaches, the paper explores five directions. The first section sketches the outlines of a conceptualisation of labour flexibility and precariousness vis-à-vis the process of labour commodification. The second section, largely referring to my own empirical research and selected examples from secondary literature on late-colonial and post-colonial Spanish America, poses space, time, and State- and private control of the workforce as key components of labour flexibility. Based on the same empirical findings, the third section addresses the limits of the employers' control over the workforce. The fourth section raises the question of the workers' perception of the precariousness of their labour, and its interrelation with workers' agency. The concluding section points to distinct fields where the global, long-term, and relational approach to the study of labour flexibility and precariousness directly contributes to contemporary debates and scholarship in the field.

Labour Commodification and Labour Flexibility

The potential of the concepts of labour flexibility and labour precariousness for long-term historical research on labour relations has hitherto gone unnoticed, arguably because of two distinct tendencies. On the one hand, the longstanding tradition in labour history and political discourse of equating the

1 The concept of 'constraint agency' echoes that of 'constraint creativity' proposed in Fisher and O'Hara 2009.

working class with industrial wage labourers and of focusing on their formal organisations has marginalised both non-industrial and/or less organised groups of workers, and all types of non-wage and coerced workers. On the other hand, the studies on coerced labour (e.g. slavery, convict labour, and indentured labour) have been traditionally fragmented into mutually isolated sub-fields. In this context, limited or few substantial research questions regarding the interactions among labour relations have emerged, additionally reflecting the split between European and non-European history.

However, three streams in recent scholarship provide the building blocks for an alternative approach. First, the focus on exchanges in global history, inspired by the 'spatial turn', has led to studies that address the connected histories of slavery, indentured work, and convict and wage labour.² Although much of this research has not been accompanied by an explicit focus on labour relations as such, it does provide a critical mass of empirical cases that were not previously available. Second, Global Labour History has expanded the notion of the 'working class' beyond wage labourers, to include slaves, coolies, convicts, serfs, tributary labourers, domestic workers and other groups of 'free' and 'unfree' labourers.³ Within this field, in *Workers of the World* Marcel van der Linden has addressed the process of commodification of labour, proposed a dual analytical distinction between autonomous/heteronomous commodification and labour power offered by the carrier him/herself or by another person, and analysed the entanglements between labour relations vis-à-vis the process of labour commodification.⁴ This conceptualisation implicitly provides a solid basis for the study of labour flexibility, as I will show in the next sections. Third, building on the vast and multi-disciplinary literature on contemporary labour

2 Just to mention some examples: Cooper, Holt and Scott (eds.) 2000; Hoerder 2002; Coates 2002; Carter 2006; Ward 2009; Anderson 2009.

3 Among the main contributions: Lucassen 2008; van der 2008; van der Linden and Himmelstoss (eds.) 2009. See also the following special issues on GLH: 'The Promise and Challenges of Global Labor History', *International Labor and Working-Class History* (New York), 82, Fall 2012; 'Travail et mondialisations', *Le Mouvement Social*, 241, 3, October–December 2012; *Sozial.Geschichte Online*, 9, 2012; 'Global Labour History', *Workers of the World*, 1, 3, 2013. For an overview of the formation of the GLH programme and network: De Vito 2013. An important debate on 'free' and 'unfree' labour has taken place during the last decades, especially represented in: Brass and van der Linden (eds.) 1997. See also: Miles 1987. Further developments can now be expected from scholarly collaboration in the 'Free and Unfree Labour' working group of the European Labour History Network (ELHN), for which see esp.: http://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DerivateServlet/Derivate-36262/08_Free_and_Unfree_Labour.pdf [all links last accessed on 1 April 2015].

4 van der Linden 2008.

precariousness, again Marcel van der Linden (in one case together with Jan Breman) has pointed out in two recent articles that 'standard employment under capitalist conditions is a historical anomaly' and that it 'had a deep impact in a limited part of the world for a relatively short period of time' – that is to say, parts of the 'North-West' in the central decades of the twentieth century.⁵ This perspective has broad implications. On the one hand, it 'provincialises' North-Western 'standard' labour relations and foregrounds the importance of a global approach to job precariousness. Within this framework, it stimulates further study of, and strengthens the findings of ongoing studies on, the following connected areas: the history of job precariousness in the Global South;⁶ the persistence of job precariousness in the Global North during Fordism, especially in relation to the work of women and (male and female) migrants;⁷ and the current convergence between Global North and Global South around the process of job casualisation.⁸ On the other hand, this global and historical perspective deconstructs the assumption, widespread among social scientists and political commentators alike, that job precariousness is an exclusively contemporary phenomenon linked with the alleged shift from industrial to post-industrial society. Consequently, it invites us to historicise labour precariousness, and to explore its *longue durée*.

At the crossroads of these changes in scholarship, a new field of research can be envisaged that focuses on labour flexibility and labour precariousness as conceptual tools to understand the interactions between various types of 'free' and 'unfree' labour relations. The relational definitions I gave at the beginning of this essay are key elements in this endeavour: they describe labour flexibility and labour precariousness at the crossroads of multiple labour relations, rather than conflating them with specific types of labour relations and contracts; they foreground the conflict between workers and employers/policy makers around the question of control over the workforce;⁹ they combine the structural and perceived aspects of flexibility and precariousness; and they place labour flexibility and precariousness within the process of both the production and reproduction of the workforce, i.e. within and beyond the labour process, for example by taking issues such as gender and ethnicity into full consideration. Because of these relational features, I contend that this approach to labour

5 van der Linden 2014, p. 19; Breman and van der Linden 2014, p. 920.

6 For example: Bodibe 2006; Dasten 2014.

7 See for example: Agárdi, Waaldijk and Salvaterra 2010; Raimondi and Ricciardi 2004; Marchetti 2014.

8 Schmidt 2005; Breman and van der Linden 2014.

9 On the question of the control over the workforce, see esp. Moulrier Boutang 1998.

flexibility and labour precariousness provides a privileged way into the study of the interactions among multiple labour relations. The two following sections will explore some key fields of labour history from this perspective.

Unravelling Labour Flexibility: Space, Time and the Nature of Control

One key question in the study of labour relations concerns the reason why certain labour relations are imbricated in the process of labour commodification within certain historical contexts. The concept of labour flexibility allows us to address this issue, insofar as it enhances the analytical study of multiple factors that determine the relative advantage of each labour relation in the eyes of the employers/policy makers. In this section I seek to show how three of these factors – spatial mobility, the length of contract/service and the state/private nature of control over labour – interact, and produce variable types and levels of labour flexibility.¹⁰ In doing so, I will mainly refer to findings from secondary literature and to my own empirical research on late-colonial and post-colonial Spanish America (ca. 1760–1898).

The figure below provides the starting point for my argument.

The values in the figure should be understood as indicative of ideal-typical situations, rather than contextualised historical cases.¹¹ As such, they do not seek to provide precise ‘measures’, but rather to visualise the relative importance of spatial mobility, length of contract/service and state/private control for a range of labour categories, and to allow for thoughts on their distinct impacts on labour flexibility.

The figure primarily highlights the impact of space and time on labour flexibility. As the definition above suggests, the key element here is the coincidence of the spatial and temporal scope of labour relations with the needs of the specific sector in which the workforce is employed. In other words, what is important for a high degree of labour flexibility is that an appropriate workforce is in the right place, at the right time and for an appropriate length of time, according to the economic and geopolitical needs of the employers and the policy makers. This goal could be attained in different ways according to the labour relations, the economic sector and the specific context.

10 These are by no means all the factors that influence labour flexibility. Among others, skill and remuneration could be considered, but will not be addressed in this essay.

11 The next section deals with contextualised aspects in more detail.

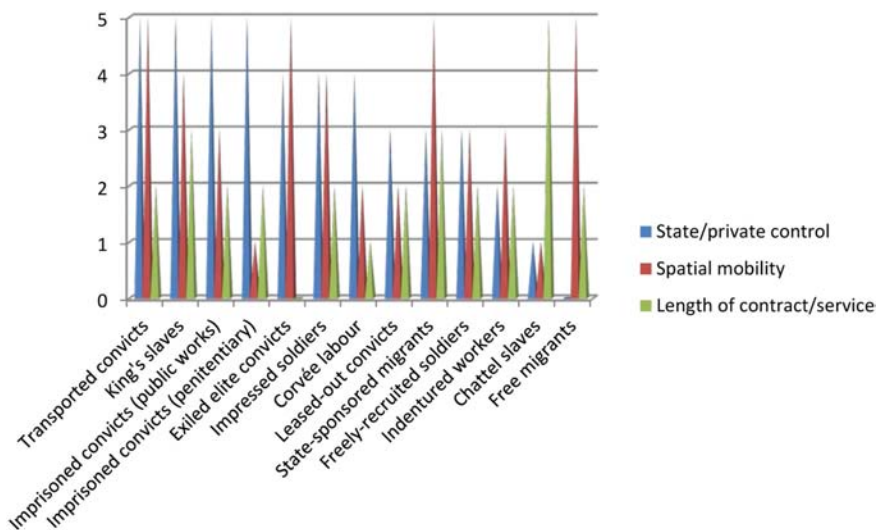


FIGURE 12.1 'Labour categories in the Spanish empire, in relation to state/private control, spatial mobility and length of contract/service'

Let us consider the case of the labour of transported convicts and chattel slavery. The former, under relatively short sentences¹² and highly mobile, was especially attractive for military labour and the building of military and non-military infrastructures in urban public works and the newly colonised regions and strategic outposts across the empire, where politics could directly move them at a given time.¹³ Conversely, chattel slavery was a life-long and hereditary legal status and labour relation, and the mobility of slaves was managed by multiple state and private agencies at different stages.¹⁴ Therefore, the slave owner who bought the enslaved worker after the Middle Passage, found the employment of slaves mostly convenient insofar as it allowed for the long-term immobilisation of the workforce. Besides status-related domestic work, chattel slavery was therefore preferred for highly productive and export-oriented agricultural labour in the plantations, as was the case for Cuba, starting with

12 Although life sentences were imposed on individuals in some cases, being sentenced either to two to ten years of public works or to *presidios* (military outposts) was far more common in the Spanish Empire.

13 See the case of penal transportation to Cuba after the Seven Years' War: Pike 1983; De Vito, forthcoming, 'Connected singularities'.

14 'Admittedly, four practices could make slavery a much more flexible labour relation than is suggested in the text: 1. emancipation; 2. selling slaves to, and buying them from, other owners; 3. leasing out slaves; and 4. punishment of slaves.'

the last decades of the eighteenth century, and in the region between the Portuguese and the Spanish dominions in Latin America.¹⁵ By contrast, it was virtually absent in areas of new colonisation motivated by geopolitical reasons, like Patagonia and the Falklands/Malvinas, where convicts played a relevant role, and in those areas where a constant flow of native tributary labour (like in Potosí) provided alternatives for mining activities.¹⁶

This relative flexibility of various labour relations did matter within specific contexts when it came to choosing the most appropriate and convenient workforce. In some cases, policy-makers deliberately sought to increase it by manipulating specific factors regarding single labour relations. For example, regarding nineteenth-century transportation to Australia, Hamish Maxwell-Stewart observed that the length of sentences (seven or fourteen years) was not determined for penal motivations, but 'in order to position convicts competitively within the trans-Atlantic market in unfree labour'. In other words, as Clare Anderson has commented, convicts 'were typically transported for a longer period of time than free labour was indentured, but put out to employment at the same price'.¹⁷

The relationship between chattel slavery and convict labour also highlights the distinct impact of state and private control over the workforce on spatial mobility and flexibility. As a general rule, the polity's direct control over convict transportation and convict labour accentuated its spatial mobility, while private ownership of slaves usually combined chattel slavery with long-term immobilisation of the workforce in specific workplaces. However, a telling overhaul occurred when the nature of the control over the convicted and enslaved workforce changed. In fact, state-owned slaves of the king (*esclavos del Rey*) in the second half of the eighteenth century were subjected to extended spatial mobility and employed in the same kind of occupations with which state-controlled convicts were usually associated – military work and building work. By contrast, convicts leased out by the state to private owners were mainly associated with agricultural work on specific plantations, such as in schemes proposed for Puerto Rico and implemented in Cuba in the 1870s and, most famously, in the case in the US South following emancipation.¹⁸

15 On this region, see esp. Grinberg 2013.

16 Gil Montero 2011. However, slavery did play a significant role in other rural areas of colonial and post-colonial Latin America, such as the regions of the Pampa and Cuyo: see Garavaglia 2013.

17 Maxwell-Stewart 2010, p. 1224; Anderson 2014, p. 120.

18 For the examples in the text, see esp.: Powell Jennings 2005; Picó 1994; Lichtenstein 1995. On the schemes for the employment of convicts in agriculture in Puerto Rico see also: Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN, Madrid), Ultramar, 5104, Exp. 10, Memoria de la visita

It can be argued that coerced spatial mobilisation of labour is the state's single most direct contribution to labour flexibility. Innumerable examples could be mentioned here regarding convict labour across the globe and throughout the centuries, up to the mass deportation to Nazi Germany, within the Soviet Union during (and after) WWII, and beyond.¹⁹ Military labour – often partly overlapping with convict labour until the gradual implementation of reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – has been traditionally the other major field of polity-bounded mass mobilisation of labour.²⁰ From the perspective of this chapter, two levels of coercion can be highlighted within the military field. On the one hand, individuals who voluntarily joined the army and the navy became subjected to military discipline and were obliged to accept any destination imposed on them by their superiors. On the other hand, vagrants, slaves, convicts and other groups of individuals impressed in the military experienced a dual coercion – as involuntary soldiers subjected to military discipline. Their spatial mobility was therefore even more accentuated than that of those recruited voluntarily, and they were more likely to be assigned to isolated and dangerous sites; moreover, besides military-related occupations, they were also often given heavier tasks, such as building military and non-military infrastructures – often together with (non-military) convicts and other tributary labourers. Unsurprisingly, they were ubiquitous in the borderlands of the Spanish empire, from the Pampa and Patagonia to North Africa and the southern islands of the Philippines.

The role of the state in enhancing labour flexibility through spatial mobility, however, was not confined to coerced labour. Politics also had a crucial, albeit less direct, impact on the mobility and flexibility of 'free' labour. The Spanish colonial state managed the recruitment and directed the destination of state-sponsored migrants from north-western Spain to Latin America in order to colonise and settle in Patagonia, the 'frontier of Buenos Aires', the Chaco and Tucumán in the late eighteenth century.²¹ Furthermore, just like the British and Dutch empires, it provided the legal and material infrastructure for the

de inspección al presidio provincial de Puerto Rico dispuesta por Real orden de 11 de Diciembre de 1872 y pasada por el Coronel Teniente Coronel de Infantería Don Geronimo de la Torre y Velasco, Puerto Rico, 14 February 1873. See also: AHN, Ultramar, 5104, Exp. 7, Geronimo San Juan y Santa Cruz, Puerto Rico, 19 June 1873.

19 For a broad range of examples across two millennia: cf. De Vito and Lichtenstein 2015.

20 For the general argument of the military as work, and as a field of multiple labour relations: Zürcher 2013. Insights on the composition of the Spanish colonial army can especially be found in Marchena Fernández 1992, esp. Chapter 4; Gómez Pérez 1992.

21 Apolant 1999; Garla 1984; Senatore 2007.

transportation of thousands of indentured workers from Asia to the Caribbean after the (official) abolition of the slave trade in 1818.²² In a different fashion, post-colonial Latin American states attracted and channelled 'proletarian mass migration' from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in order to pursue their own goals of internal colonisation and management of the free and coerced workforce.²³

In most cases, the role of the state in directing the tasks and destinations of workers – and therefore in enhancing labour flexibility – was such that the 'freedom' of the wage labourers involved in the process appears very limited. Indeed, rather than facing each other in a clear-cut opposition, 'free' and 'unfree' labour appear as part of a continuum, and the semi-coerced experience of those allegedly 'free' wage labourers comes close to the fragile freedom of post-emancipation 'prize negroes' (Africans taken off slave ships intercepted by British patrols after the abolition of the slave trade) and '*africanos livres/libres*' (in Portuguese and Spanish respectively). Moreover, the existence of such a continuum was accentuated by distinctions in levels and types of labour flexibility within each labour relation. Just as contemporary literature on labour flexibility/precarioussness has addressed the diversity of labour contracts within wage labour, differences within each ('free' and 'unfree') labour relation can be observed in historical contexts. In the case of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spanish America, for example, major disparities existed within convict labour, depending on whether prisoners were sentenced to penal transportation, imprisonment with public works, or imprisonment in the penitentiary. Spatial mobility was by definition higher in penal transportation and lower in the case of work within the walls of the penitentiaries that were gradually opened in urban centres during the nineteenth century ('intra-mural' work).²⁴ The spatial scope of convict labour employed in public works tended to settle in between the two, both when 'extramural' works were performed in the same cities where the prison was located, and when temporary penal institutions were literally moved along the building sites.²⁵ These diverse

22 Northrup 1995; Kale 1998; Jung 2006; Termorshuizen 2008; Mahmud 2012. On Latin America see for example: Yun 2008.

23 For Brazil see esp.: Viotti da Costa 1966; Nóbrega and Toste Daflon 2009; Chalhoub 2012; Lago 2014.

24 Salvatore and Aguirre 1996.

25 This was the case with the 'mobile prisons' (*presidios ambulantes*) of early nineteenth-century rural Chile, the provisional prisons built along the *Carretera Central* in Puerto Rico, and the 'good roads' of the US 'New South' in the second half of the same century. Cf. In particular León León 1998; Picó 1994; Lichtenstein 1995.

forms of convict labour, therefore, took distinct places in the ideal continuum of labour relations. The same happened with other labour relations. Within slavery, major distinctions existed between privately- and state-owned slaves – as I have observed earlier – and between plantation and domestic slavery; free and coerced recruitment played a significant role in diversifying flexibility in the military field, with coerced soldiers additionally being formed by slaves, convicts, and tributary labourers. Various forms of wage labour also featured distinct characteristics in relation to labour flexibility, with free-, indentured- and state-sponsored migrations implying distinct forms of private and state control over the workforce. Moreover, as in the present world, multiple contract regimes existed for wage labourers, which dictated diverse lengths of employment, working conditions, the amount of wages and further incentives.

The differentiated flexibility of multiple (sub-)types of labour relations was a key aspect in producing distinct sets of labour relations within specific sites and regions. To give one example, the standard scheme for new colonisation in the late eighteenth-century Spanish empire – implemented in Upper California, Osorno and Patagonia, among other regions – featured an explicit distinction between four groups of workers: the settlers, made up of state-sponsored migrants from nearby regions or peninsular Spain, who were especially recruited for their skills in agricultural work and stayed as independent workers; the artisans and skilled (non-agricultural) workers, whose wages and incentives were aimed at attracting their free migration and stabilising them in the new sites; the fluctuating population of soldiers, mariners and convicts, who were brought to the new settlements when military imperatives and the need to build and maintain the infrastructures required their workforce, and were subsequently moved on to other destinations; and the native populations, whose tribute included the building and repair of the roads that connected the new colonies among themselves and with the main trade routes. The presence of each group of workers in those locations, therefore, was based on the relative advantages (flexibility) of the labour relations in which they were imbricated.²⁶

The same dynamics characterised shifts in labour relations. Indeed, these rarely took place as linear substitutions of one labour relation by another. As Robert J. Steinfeld has observed, they can rather be described as ‘a story of one set of historical practices with one mix of kinds of freedom and unfreedom for labouring people replacing another set of historical practices with a

26 De Vito forthcoming, ‘Convict labour in the southern borderlands of Latin America (ca. 1750–1910s)’. For a broader comparison of colonisation strategies within the Spanish empire in the same period: Navarro García 1994.

different mix of kinds of freedom and unfreedom'.²⁷ Accordingly, in the borderlands of Patagonia, or along the frontier between Argentina and Brazil, for example, the colonisation scheme described above continued well into the nineteenth century.²⁸ Convicts, voluntary and (most often) impressed soldiers remained instrumental in building the infrastructures, and in the military campaigns against the native populations, which in turn were forcibly 'assimilated' through tributary labour. As the frontier advanced, migrants from Germany, Italy, Wales and other European territories settled down, being attracted to those specific sites by their own social networks and the states' emigration and immigration schemes. Rather than a linear shift from coerced to 'free' wage labour, then, distinct types of labour flexibility continued to produce mixed sets of 'free' and 'unfree' labour, albeit of a different nature to the past. A situation which especially Brazilian historians have foregrounded also for urban and non-agricultural contexts, such as the building of railways, and which underpinned a long-term entanglement between the new European waged workforce, coerced soldiers in the unreformed military, and (illegally) enslaved labour.

In this section I have so far addressed the way the perspective of labour flexibility allows for the analysis of the following aspects: the way certain labour relations become imbricated in the processes of labour commodification within specific historical contexts; the distinct types of labour flexibility within each labour relation; the multiple combinations of labour relations; and the shifts in labour relations. One last aspect can be added to this overview of the entanglements between labour commodification and labour flexibility. In *Workers of the World*, Marcel van der Linden has highlighted that the multiple forms by which labour commodification takes place can co-exist diachronically and synchronically in the lives of individual workers.²⁹ Indeed, in colonial and post-colonial Spanish America, *mitayos* providing tributary labour in the Potosi mines could be self-employed on the same sites in different days and times; soldiers could also be agricultural settlers; and the same individual could be slave and wage labourer at the same time.³⁰ Diachronic combinations also took place, pointing to the importance of the duration of the labour relation – and time, more generally – in the study of labour commodification and flexibility. In some cases, one individual repeatedly entered the same labour relation. For

27 Steinfeld 1991, p. 9.

28 See esp. Fortes, Espada Lima, Lima Xavier and Ferraz Petersen 2013. See also: Brunello 1994; Beattie 1999; Souza 2010; Cutrera 2013.

29 Van der Linden 2008, p. 20.

30 Barragán 2015.

example, as the *filiaciones* of soldiers show,³¹ the relatively short duration (usually six to eight years) of military service in the Spanish empire did not prevent coerced impressment and voluntary recruitment from taking place again and again during the lifespan of each individual: accompanied by spatial mobility, multiple recruitment thus made up the basis for 'imperial careerism' not only for officers, but also for troops,³² and increased the overall flexibility of military labour. Single individuals also entered into multiple types of labour relations.³³ Not only were convicts made into soldiers by being impressed into the military, but desertion and non-military-related crimes turned soldiers into convicts. And crimes committed on the plantations in Cuba transformed Chinese coolies and African slaves into impressed soldiers in Santo Domingo, forced labourers in the military fortification in Ceuta, and the convict workforce that built the Carretera Central of Puerto Rico in the 1850s–70s.³⁴

The Limits of Labour Flexibility

A high level of labour flexibility never amounts to employers having total control over the workforce. Even under the most extreme conditions of coercion, the latter is significantly limited by multiple factors involved in the recruitment, mobilisation and management of labour. This section explores some of the limits to absolute labour flexibility through examples regarding convict labour in eighteenth-century Spanish America. The following section deals with arguably the most important limitation to labour flexibility – workers' individual and collective agency – and poses the question of workers' perceptions of labour precariousness.

By definition, the key element in labour flexibility is the possibility for employers and policy-makers to synchronise the presence of the workforce in a given site with their productive and political needs. As space and time are therefore two fundamental variables in labour flexibility, they are equally fields where most limitations to labour flexibility become visible in histor-

31 See for example the personal records (*filiaciones*) of repeated deserters held in Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Sevilla), Arribadas, 548 and 549.

32 Lambert and Lester 2010.

33 van der Linden 2008, esp. pp. 20–32.

34 The main sources on Chinese coolies and African slaves deported to Puerto Rico are held in AHN, Ultramar, 2069, Exp. 48; AHN, Ultramar, 2078, Exp. 2, 3 and 4; AHN, Ultramar, 2080, Exp. 4, 13, 14, 21, 23 and 24; AHN, Ultramar, 2081, Exp. 4. For 'slave convicts' in Brazil: Beattie 2009.

ical contexts. Taking convict labour in eighteenth-century Spanish America as an example, some entangled areas are particularly interesting for this analysis. To begin with, the exploitation of convict labour required a synchronisation of punishment and labour that was never attained in the ideal-typical form sketched in the previous section.³⁵ The legal system followed distinct procedures, depended on peculiar cultures, and had its own timeline. It also featured a distinct spatiality. The difference in the catching areas of legal and administrative institutions limited the state capacity to move the convict geographically: therefore, in the mid-eighteenth century, while a prisoner could be transported from Charcas (Bolivia) to the Malvinas/Falklands, as they fell under the same legal jurisdiction, he or she could not be transported from Charcas to Caracas, which belonged to distinct Vice-royalties (Peru and New Granada) and different courts (*Audiencias*). Furthermore, the social, cultural, and political construction of 'crime' and 'the criminal', reflected in legal cultures and practices, additionally produced differentiations amongst the convicted population, and dictated diverse regimes of punishment, the duration of sentences and the destination of prisoners. Moreover, as I observed in the previous section, not all regimes of punishment implied the same level of geographical mobility, and certain regimes excluded the exploitation of convict labour altogether, most obviously in the cases of capital punishment and the banishment of elite convicts. No doubt, in an institutional setting where legal and political actors often overlapped, amnesties, commutations of punishment and special decrees were sometimes explicitly aimed at facilitating and expanding the use of convict labour where and when it was deemed economically appropriate. In general, however, the dialectic (and tension) between the fields of law and labour reduced the relative flexibility of convict labour.

The material organisation of penal transportation also proved a very complex task, and impacted negatively on labour flexibility.³⁶ In the Age of Sail, the navigation from peninsular Spain to Spanish America was limited to specific months – on 6 September 1766, for example, a Royal Decree established that, in order to safely sail through Cape Horn, all ships directed to Callao be only allowed to leave Cadiz between 1 September and 1 November, and those leaving for Cadiz were to exclusively leave Callao from 1 October to 1 December.³⁷ Moreover, before the 1760s, convicts were exclusively transported on board of a relatively small number of warships and galleons that mainly proceeded from

35 Interesting insights are in Cutter 1995; Benton and Ross 2013; Hidalgo Nuchera 2013.

36 For a comparative argument based on penal transportation in various empires: Anderson, Crockett, De Vito, Miyamoto, Moss, Roscoe and Sakata 2015.

37 Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Seville), Lima, 1524, Real Orden 6 Septiembre 1766.

Cadiz to the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, and back. After that decade, trade liberalisation gradually multiplied the routes and the frequency of convict transportation, but also contributed to making the state's overview of the penal transportation system more complex. This reduced the state's capacity to allocate the prisoners' workforce according to economic and geopolitical needs. On top of that, walking the land-routes that integrated sea-voyages was a highly problematic endeavour, with prisoners enchained in convoys (*cuerdas de presidiarios*) and accompanied by soldiers, subjected to frequent stopovers, diseases and death.³⁸

The set of limitations to the polities' control over the convicts' spatial mobility increased the employers' problem regarding labour turnover. Indeed, the difficulties in synchronising the recruitment processes of multiple types of labour contrasted with the need for a stable workforce during the whole period of a required activity. This was particularly true in the case of skilled labour. Unsurprisingly then, archival sources on the settlements in the southern borderlands, for example, witness the broad sets of coercion and gratification that were used by authorities and employers to stabilise artisans and other skilled workers, including skilled convicted labourers.³⁹

Budget limitations represented yet another major factor that created a gap between the ideal-typical flexibility of labour relations and the employers' actual capacity to mobilise the workforce.⁴⁰ Financial constraint downsized metropolitan and viceregal plans for colonisation and economic exploitation. Moreover, while on paper convict labour was cheaper than almost any other workforce, in reality transporting and maintaining prisoners during the voyage was expensive, as was their maintenance and surveillance at destination, particularly when convicts were perceived as dangerous and willing to escape. Prisoners' labour could still be convenient in borderlands whose colonisation was geared towards reaffirming sovereignty rather than economic exploitation; however, when productive sectors were involved, employers usually complained about the low productivity of this enchained and unmotivated workforce. When economic incentives were proposed for convicts by local officials, as in Puerto Rico in the second half of the nineteenth century, political authorities in Madrid tended to reduce their scope and quantity in order to minimise their impact on the overall cost of the workforce.⁴¹

38 See for example: García de los Arcos 1996.

39 See esp. Senatore 2007. For an insightful intervention on the issue of labour mobility and turnover, see Smith 2006.

40 On the *situado* system in Spanish America: Marchena Fernandez 1983.

41 Archivo Historico Nacional (AHN, Madrid), Ultramar, 370, Exp. 14, 15 and 16.

Workers' Agency and Labour Precariousness

While other actors addressed the asynchrony of punishment and labour, organised penal transportation, and sought to cope with budget limitations in order to maintain the desired level of flexibility of convict labour, prisoners themselves did not remain passive: their everyday forms of resistance forced officers and employers to adapt productive and reproductive processes; their escapes suddenly disrupted the mechanism of exploitation of their labour; their revolts were repressed, but often involved convicts being transferred to new destinations, and sometimes enforced broader re-organisations of the workforce; and when prisoners petitioned the king to be transferred to a different prison or site of transportation, they became part of the decision-process concerning punishment and destination, which involved multiple state- and non-state actors across various sites. The convicts' agency was clearly limited by the circumstances of punishment and coercion, yet it was significant. It also rarely took shape in a void. It was related to the experiences and agency of other free and unfree workers: to the revolts, mutinies, petitions, strikes and less formalised expression of opposition carried out by slaves, soldiers, mariners, coolies and wage labourers.

From the perspective of this chapter, the key question about workers' agency revolves around how far and under which circumstances it was based on labour precariousness, that is, according to my definition, the workers' own perception of their (lack of) control over their labour power in relation to other workers, the labour market, and the social reproduction of their workforce. In particular, we may want to address two distinct, yet connected issues: first, how far did the agency of workers imbricated in a single labour relation stem from (implicit or explicit) comparison with the capacity of workers to control aspects of their labour? Second, how far did the relational character of labour precariousness promote solidarity (or conflict) among different groups of workers across labour relations?

Both questions foreground the worker's subjective and relational perceptions and this focus, in turn, opens up an important methodological problem, for the structure of the archives especially impedes unmediated access to subaltern voices and therefore limits our understanding of the labourers' own perceptions of work and precariousness.⁴² For the most part, the quant-

42 The complexity of this issue has been especially addressed by microhistorians, scholars involved in the *Alltagsgeschichte* (through the concept of *Eigensinn*) and early Subaltern Studies writings: Lüdtke 1995; Guha 1997; Gribaudi 1998; Ramella 2001. In the field of colo-

itatively limited historical studies that have addressed these issues have paid scant attention to how the workers' perception of precariousness emerged from explicit or implicit comparisons, and solidarity/conflict, with the experiences of other workers. Exceptions exist, however, and some strategies have emerged regarding the sources that might be used for this endeavour. Labour historians of late- and post-colonial Latin America and the Caribbean have prioritised petitions and judicial sources in order to unearth workers' comparative perceptions.⁴³ Their works have highlighted that these sources, although mediated by institutional frames, can provide glimpses into the workers' sense of a 'just' measure of coercion and control over their labour, and into their efforts to better their working conditions. It is also in such sources that scholars can find traces of direct comparisons made by workers, such as when convicts complained about being 'treated like slaves' and free migrants of being treated 'like convicts'.

Lisa Yun's *The Coolie Speaks* provides an outstanding example of the potential of the study of petitions. This research of Chinese indentured labourers and African slaves in Cuba in the second half of the nineteenth century is entirely based on nearly three thousand oral depositions and written petitions by Chinese coolies in response to the inquiry of a Commission sent by China in 1874. Among others, the Commission posed the following set of questions:⁴⁴

The contract coolie is a man who has pledged himself to work according to contract for a term of years: he is not a slave. Is he treated as a man who consented to be bound by a contract, or as a slave? Are there slaves in Cuba – or were there, and what is or was their treatment?

nial and post-colonial studies see esp. Stoler 2009; Anderson 2012. See also: Hofmeester and Moll-Murata 2011, p. 7. Among other key questions, the editors asked themselves how 'wage labour as a kind of commodified labour' was 'perceived in comparison with other labour relations'. The issue included an important theoretical essay by Marcel van der Linden, featuring definitions of 'work' and 'attitude' and notes on some types of sources that might be conducive to investigate the topic. Among the empirical essays, Raquel Gil Montero's contribution focused on the coexistence of *mita* and 'free labour' in the silver mines of Potosí during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; her arguments on the fluidity of the nature and perception of 'unfreedom' and 'freedom' resonated with Rossana Barragán's research on the same site in the late-colonial period: Gil Montero 2011; Barragán 2015.

43 See for example: Espada Lima 2013. See also the website of the *Grupo de Estudios Historia y Justicia*: <http://historiayjusticia.org/>.

44 Yun 2008 (citation on p. 105). On Chinese coolies in Cuba see also López 2013.

In response, indentured workers provided highly subjective 'visions of the contract and freedom', ranging from Li Zicheng's definition of the coolies as 'law-abiding people [who] worked as contract labor in order to live', to testimonies of close association with enslavement, as in the case of Zhang Dingjia's description of being 'treated worse than dogs and oxen', and for the multiple references to denial of the 'freedom paper' after completion of the original eight-year service. The Spanish colonial sources held at the Archivo Historico Nacional in Madrid⁴⁵ additionally inform us that these subjective perceptions provoked differentiated reactions from the Chinese coolies, and that when a sense of injustice prevailed, widespread suicide and collectively organised murders of the plantation overseers occurred. The latter, interestingly, were aimed against white, Asian or black overseers (*mayorales*, *contramayorales* and *mayordomos*) who were held responsible for particular acts of coercion and violence, and were performed by Chinese indentured workers – either alone or together with black slaves.⁴⁶

As in this case, studying workers' precariousness raises questions about how far the workers' comparison of their conditions with those of other workers provided the ground for solidarity among workers across multiple labour relations; whether it enhanced collective agency and (formally or informally) organised social conflict; and, ultimately, how far shared representations and mobilisations ignited the process of creation of a 'working class'.⁴⁷ The issue resonates with the question addressed by Marcel van der Linden in *Workers of the World*, when the author asks himself about the 'dividing line' between the workers and those who have more power, and refers to Cornelius Castoriadis's concept of 'instituted heteronomy'.⁴⁸ In this perspective, the oppression and the lack of power forced upon workers from above produces 'an antagonistic division of society' and may lead to a shared sense of class identity among 'subaltern workers'. Similarly, under certain conditions the sense of the workers' lack of control over their labour power produced common perceptions and shared practices of conflict among workers across distinct labour relations. To return to the case presented above, besides murdering the overseers, groups of slaves and Chinese coolies set fire to the plantation, escaped and joined the

45 See footnote 35 for archival sources.

46 Yun 2008, pp. 105–33. Quotation on pp. 129 (Li Zicheng) and 120 (Zhang Dingjia). Selected petitions are reproduced in translation in the Addendum, pp. 243–59.

47 The opposite question, that is, whether labour precariousness prompted desolidarisation and conflict among different types of workers, is of course equally relevant for historical studies and contemporary research.

48 van der Linden 2008, p. 33.

multi-racial insurgent army in eastern Cuba on the eve of the wars of liberation that began in 1868.⁴⁹ Their vision of those conflicts prioritised the goal of freedom from a broadly defined 'enslavement', as had been the case for other coerced labourers on the eve of Latin American independence some decades earlier, no matter which side they chose. In a similar fashion, convicts, soldiers and sailors planned a joint upheaval even in the far-away settlements of Puerto de la Soledad, in late eighteenth-century Malvinas,⁵⁰ and implemented their plans elsewhere.⁵¹

Another way to address the issue of the workers' sense of precariousness as a trigger for cross-contracts/service workers' solidarity is to look at the solidarity campaigns with unfree workers that emerged within the organised working-class movement from the late nineteenth century onwards. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Latin American and Caribbean anarchists, many of whom were European migrants, were especially keen on including emancipated slaves and indigenous groups in their ranks, and repeatedly condemned the racially-based coercion of fellow workers.⁵² From the perspective of this chapter, these campaigns reveal distinct political cultures across organisations and a dual, often contradictory, significance. On the one hand, they reflect concrete grass-roots solidarity among workers across distinct labour relations, and the entanglements that existed also, for example, between anti-slavery activists and the protagonists of the First International and related regional organisations, as Marcelo Badaró Mattos has shown in a recent art-

49 Yun 2008, p. 33; Scott 2000; Ferrer 1999. The participation of slaves in Royalist armies could be equally inspired by the hope of emancipation: Echeverri 2011.

50 Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Seville), Buenos Aires 553.

51 Peter Linebaugh's and Marcus Rediker's *The Many-Headed Hydra* stands out as the volume that, more than any other, has addressed this issue, albeit not explicitly from the perspective of labour precariousness: Linebaugh and Rediker 2000. The point made by the authors also applies to other contexts beyond the Revolutionary North Atlantic: see esp. Frykman, Anderson, Heerma van Voss and Rediker, 2013; Fusaro, Allaire, Blakemore and Tijl 2015.

52 Shaffer 2014. On the role of slaves and 'free' workers in the formation of Rio de Janeiro's working class: Badaró Mattos 2008. Similarly, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) notoriously sought to organise workers across gender and ethnic backgrounds and included seasonal 'hobo' workers. See for example: Chester 2014; Higbie 2004. US liberals, socialist and communists during the New Deal actively campaigned against 'peonage', a fluid category in which they included multiple coerced labour relations. See Pizzolato, Nicola forthcoming, 'American peonage during the New Deal: connections, categories, scales, 1935–1952', in *Translocal- and Micro-Histories of Global Labour*, edited by Christian G. De Vito and Anne Gerritsen, forthcoming.

icle.⁵³ On the other hand, when campaigners constructed ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ labour in mutual opposition, they more or less explicitly coalesced free wage labour with ‘modernity’, and unfree labour with ‘backwardness’. In doing so, they shaped the identity of the working class movement as belonging to ‘free’ wage labourers, rather than to all workers whose labour was exploited and commodified – a tendency that still represents a major limitation of the union movement in our time, as especially the difficult inclusion, or outright exclusion, of migrant, domestic and non-wage workers shows.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, the tradition of labour history that accompanied those labour movements was equally centred on wage labourers and their organisations, and excluded or treated as distinct the histories of other workers – a long-term removal and distortion which especially global labour historians have consciously sought to reverse in the last decades.

Labour Flexibility and Labour Precariousness: Past and Present

This chapter is an invitation to approach contemporary labour flexibility/precariousness as a global, long-term, and relational phenomenon. As such, it suggests a three-fold alternative conceptualisation vis-à-vis mainstream views of labour flexibility/precariousness in contemporary literature. The global perspective suggests the need to radically overcome Eurocentrist approaches to labour precariousness, such as those that are based on the conflation of the process of (relative) de-industrialisation in the North-West with the rise of a supposedly ‘post-industrial’ or ‘post-materialist’ society globally. It also calls for the integration of scholarship on the Global North and the Global South, and for the connected study of labour casualisation.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the long-term perspective opposes the standard idea of labour flexibility/precariousness as a recent phenomenon, allegedly emerging in the 1970s as a consequence of the birth of ‘post-industrial’ society and ‘neoliberal globalisation’.⁵⁶ Conversely, this

53 Badaró Mattos, Marcelo, forthcoming, ‘Rotte atlantiche. Lotte abolizioniste e formazione della classe lavoratrice’, *Zapruder*, 37. See also: Putnam 2013.

54 For a few examples regarding migrant workers: Watts 2003; Miguel Martinez Lucio 2009, pp. 324–47; Sacchetto and Perrotta 2012, pp. 152–66.

55 For a similar approach see esp.: Thornley, Jeffreys and Appay 2010; Lee 2014, pp. 688–710.

56 A useful survey of the literature, which additionally addresses the need for historicisation of labour precariousness, was presented by Betti 2013. See also ‘Gender and Precarious Labor in a historical perspective. Italian women and precarious work between Fordism and Post-Fordism’, Special Issue ‘*Precarious Labor in Global Perspective*’, edited by C. Tilly, J. Stillerman, S. Mosoetsa, *International Labour and Working-Class History*, forthcoming

view re-joins the approach of those scholars who have advocated a full-fledged historicisation of job precariousness; more, it suggests that the chronological scope of historical and global research should be expanded back to the centuries before the 1970s, and before the industrial revolution, which have been so far the almost unpassable watershed in this field of study. Finally, the relational perspective on labour flexibility/precariousness questions Guy Standing's basic assumptions in *The Precariat*,⁵⁷ which views 'the precariat' as a separate social and political subjectivity, indeed as a 'class-in-the-making' with 'distinctive relations of production'. By contrast, this chapter has shown that labour flexibility/precariousness reveals the entanglements between multiple labour relations within specific historical contexts and in connection with economic and societal goals. Moreover, I have contended that labour flexibility/precarisation has historically emerged from within the continuum of 'free' and 'unfree' labour relations. From this perspective, whereas the literature on contemporary job flexibility/precariousness focuses exclusively on wage labour and self-employment, I suggest the need to extend the analysis to include all forms of 'modern slavery' that appear perfectly at ease with contemporary capitalism, and are possibly expanding as part of the global 'race to the bottom'.⁵⁸ This point is reinforced by the forthcoming volume edited by Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García, where cases of contemporary coerced labour are presented, spanning the Global South and North.⁵⁹

The chapter additionally highlights the contradictory role of the state as key player in both labour flexibilisation/precarisation and market regulation. This suggests the need to go beyond the conflation of contemporary labour stability with the welfare state, and labour precariousness with the alleged 'dismissal' of the state in the time of globalisation. To the contrary, this essay is a reminder that polities have managed the spatial mobilisation of millions of coerced workers in the past, and continue to use their direct control over part of the workforce in the present, for example in relation to military conflicts. Furthermore, the historical examples about the direct and indirect role of the state in the management and allocation of 'free' migrant labour strongly

2016. However, the author limits the chronological expansion back to the Industrial Revolution, accepts the category of 'post-Fordism', and exclusively focuses on wage labour – three approaches that appear problematic from the perspective proposed in the present essay.

57 Standing 2011; Standing 2014, pp. 963–80 (citations on p. 969).

58 See esp. Bales 1999; Guérin 2013, pp. 119–34. For a detailed discussion of modern slavery within the framework of the debate on 'free' and 'unfree' labour, see Zanin 2012.

59 Van der Linden and García Rodríguez forthcoming.

resonate with the function of contemporary states in regulating migration through national policies and bilateral/transnational agreements. Indeed, as some authors have noticed, through the legal construction and policing of 'illegal' migrants, politics today are responsible for the creation of a vast pool of unprotected workers.⁶⁰

This chapter's final contribution to contemporary debates on labour flexibility/precarioussness stems from the parallel that exists between the historiographical debate about the reconceptualisation of the 'working class', on the one hand, and the political quest for a (new) subaltern subject in the present world on the other. Indeed, as soon as global labour historians proposed to re-think the 'working class' beyond wage labour, resistance followed, for example, from Bryan D. Palmer, on the ground that deconstructing the centrality of wage labour might imply a risk of theoretical and political fragmentation.⁶¹ Moreover, among global labour historians a discussion has taken place on the outcomes of that reconceptualisation, with categories such as those of 'subaltern workers', 'labouring poor' and 'subaltern' being proposed, respectively, by Marcel Van der Linden, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and Willem van Schendel.⁶² More recently, the question of 'theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century' on the basis of a historical and non-Eurocentric approach has been explicitly addressed by the contributors to the volume *Über Marx hinaus*, edited by Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth.⁶³ This set of conceptualisations stands at the cross-roads of historiographical and political convictions, the latter spanning various types of Marxisms, and beyond Marxism. Within this framework, the relational definitions of labour flexibility/precarioussness proposed in this essay represent a two-fold intervention. On the one hand, more than fifty years after E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*,⁶⁴ the relational definitions underline how class formation is a social, political, economic and cultural process, rather than a deterministic reaction of allegedly 'structural' factors on the 'consciousness' of a pre-existing class. On the other hand, they suggest that the formation of a new subaltern subjectivity today demands the transnational solidarity of subaltern workers across all labour relations and contractual statuses (including

60 See for example: Serafini 1974; Raimondi and Ricciardi 2004; Ngai 2005; Fudge 2012, pp. 95–132.

61 Palmer 2010.

62 Van Schendel 2007, p. 260; Bhattacharya and Sabyasachi 2007, pp. 7–19; Van der Linden 2008.

63 Van der Linden and Marcel and Karl Heinz Roth (eds.) 2011.

64 Thompson 1963.

unemployment), rather than fetishising the nation state, essentialising specific groups (whether 'the precariat' or the 'industrial working class') and invoking 'multitudes' abstracted from labour and social processes.⁶⁵

65 Hardt and Negri 2001; Standing 2011.

Re-assessing Labour and Value Transfer under Capitalism*

Andrea Komlosy

Introduction

For many years Marcel van der Linden's work has contributed to working out the diversity of the existences of male and female workers, of the forms of labour and exploitation and the forms of protest, resistance and organisation on the part of male and female workers: based on a vast network of contacts and preliminary work, he tends to look at the world as a whole. This world-regional comparison combines with his interest for breaks, conjunctures and turning points, including the non-synchronicities arising from the unequal role of world regions in the division of labour regarding employment, labour and social security.¹

My own research into global labour relations was greatly inspired by van der Linden's contributions and can build on them. In this essay on the occasion of Marcel's 60th birthday I would like to initially subject the concept of value transfer – which I understand as an umbrella term for values which an employer (capitalist) is able to appropriate by accessing the labour yields of others – to a systematic theoretical assessment, and then proceed to offer a few considerations on putting it into operation on the basis of empirical historical and social-scientific research.

These considerations also have a political dimension insofar as conclusions can be drawn from the breadth of the forms of labour and exploitation as to where resistance can and should begin, and what alternatives we can and should focus on. In this essay, the appropriation of the labour yield of others not only refers to the wage-labour relationship and the surplus value gained from it, but considers all labour relations from which an employer accumulates value.

* Translated by Ben Lewis, March 2014

1 In *Workers of the World* (van der Linden 2008), he brought together lots of theoretical and empirical preliminary work into an overall picture.

Value transfer not only occurs through indirect and direct access to the capacity to work but can derive from other advantages arising from differences in prices and productivity, as well as from differences in the capacity to control markets, to monopolise and to regulate. Here these transfers are only incorporated into my considerations to the extent that they have an impact on labour relations.

It should be mentioned that even though I draw on fundamental categories of Marx and the Marxists, I personally am not arguing within the framework of Marxism. By no means am I as well-versed in Marxism as Marcel van der Linden and because of my socialisation in bourgeois-academic historical science and the Green alternative movement of the 1970s and 80s, I am not able to do justice to Marx’s complex work as a whole, let alone criticise it. My systematic considerations proceed from historical-empirical issues rather than theoretical ones. In doing so I look for suitable models of analysis. I combine different explanatory approaches and models of analysis that have not taken notice of, or recognised, each other without any ideological reservations.

Which labour relations allow an owner of capital to appropriate values?

Value transfer

Surplus value from wage labour

- from free wage labour
- from forced (unfree) wage labour

Realised through the employment of a wage labourer (free or unfree)

Surplus product/rents

- Result of personal dependence on (or subjection by) the dominant property owner, who presides over land, which is used by a peasant sub-owner in exchange for *corvée* labour or product rent
- Payment for the use of land, property and rights (whose title deeds are often based on feudal allocation)

Realised by drawing rents in the form of the capacity to work, the product of labour or money tribute

Transfer value from unpaid work

Realised by

- a combination of paid, underpaid and unpaid labour relations in the family
 - a combination of different labour relations and rent incomes in the framework of commodity chains
-

The classic Marxist approach, which sees an owner of capital appropriate values from the labour (of other people), focuses on the surplus value gained by the capitalist, because his spending on wages is less than the value that the employee creates through his labour as a wage labourer. The fact that Marx distinguished between absolute and relative surplus value renders the concept more precise, but does not at all change the fact that it is only wage workers who are considered to be the source of surplus value.

Free wage labour is considered to be the dominant labour relationship in developed capitalism. Of course, Marx and the Marxists were, or are, aware that in addition to this there are also other labour relations, such as peasant subsistence agriculture, domestic and family work, the simple commodity production of the small-scale self-employed in agriculture, manufacturing and services as well as the diverse forms of precarious ways of securing an existence through seasonal and casual work. Yet these labour relations were regarded as relics which would become less and less prominent and eventually disappear with the capitalisation of labour relations.² The fact that this was not the case, that these relations in the developed states, where in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they tended to be in decline, today even began to grow in importance again, has placed in question the claims to monopoly of the classical theory of value and surplus value regarding the determination of exploitation by capitalist labour relations.³ In the global periphery such relations were in any case always in the majority, and their dominance was crucial in ensuring that these

2 Only pension incomes from earnings on capital, property and real estate were recognised as value-securing and value-forming sources in capitalism. So that they can be realised, these incomes often presuppose labour input, for example the processing of rent, or other contributions advanced by the proprietor (labour rents, like the form of compulsory labour [*corvée* labour], indentured labour, debt bondage).

3 Van der Linden and Roth (eds.) 2009; Neusüß 1985.

regions were viewed, by Marxists too, as backward, as having not yet arrived at capitalism in the proper sense of the word.

The increase in labour relations which do not correspond to classical socially and legally secure wage labour has awoken interest in these other forms of labour: unpaid subsistence and domestic labour, underpaid labour under informal and precarious conditions, work in the 'shadow economy', slave and other forced labour. It turned out that none of these labour forms were relics which would disappear in the wake of a capitalism that was forging ahead, but that we were dealing with existing labour relations which under the ongoing commodification of labour and living relations in capitalism obtained a completely new form and function:

- Subsistence work (unpaid) in small-scale agriculture, in the construction of houses, in the production of food and commodities contributes by way of non-cash self-sufficiency to people being able to survive in spite of low wages and phases of unemployment and underemployment.⁴
- Housework (unpaid) can be regarded as one of the varieties of subsistence work: whereas in pre-capitalist times it was conducted alongside labour for the market, the landlords, a contractor or a client and was regarded as an integral aspect of ensuring survival, with the separation of gainful employment from the context of domestic, peasant and/or manufacturing-based living and working, it was no longer regarded as labour but as (an unpaid) attribute ascribed to the housewife and mother qua their gender.⁵ As with subsistence work, the unpaid work of rearing, treatment and care in a family household that does not preside over any means of production to independently attain its own earned income makes it possible to prepare workers for deployment as male and female wage labourers and to be provided with care as they work; after being 'used' in wage labour the family household serves as a catch basin for the unemployed, the sick and the elderly.
- A broad spectrum of employment can be included under the umbrella term of informality:⁶ here there are on the one hand people who cannot find regular employment on the labour market and who set themselves up as small businessmen in a grey zone of the economy in which wages are kept low and the payment of taxes and social security is largely avoided.

4 Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies 1997; Meillassoux 1986; von Werlhof, Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 1983.

5 Bock and Duden 1977, pp. 118–99; Duden and Hausen 1979, pp. 11–33.

6 Komlosy, Parnreiter, Stacher and Zimmermann (eds.) 1997.

On the other hand, dependent employees whose employers or contractors disregard prevailing customs and rights or circumvent them in order to save on the costs of wages and social support, also belong to the informal sector. The concrete temporal and spatial manifestations of informality and informalisation vary because they are characterised by their deviation from the prevailing regulations in a given place. What the people working under informal conditions have in common is that they only receive a part of the income that is paid for comparable activities in formally regulated labour relations.

Informal labour is thus paid labour: since the remuneration (of dependent workers) or the income (of the self-employed workers) is below that of the usual level under formal conditions, it can be regarded as 'underpaid'; in order to compensate for this underpayment, informally employed people are to a considerable extent dependent on a combination of incomes or on unpaid work.

- Even if informal activities sometimes break the law, they cannot be ascribed to the sphere of illegality; whether informality is made illegal or not largely depends on the labour laws and the consequences and effectiveness with which these laws are enforced.
- Salaried employment, where labour laws, registration fees, taxes and social security contributions are circumvented, are often referred to as 'moonlighting' or the 'shadow economy'. Besides the statistical distortions that occur as a result of this 'shadowing' effect, the injured parties are the state, which is deprived of taxes, and workers, who are deprived of direct and indirect wage components.
- Ivan Illich has introduced another definition of 'working in the shadows' to the debate:⁷ by this he refers to those activities that must be carried out so that a wage worker can even exist in industrial society. However, by this he does not mean the domestic and subsistence work that provides food and care free of charge, but all possible activities that are necessary to be able to receive wage labour and wages and to survive on it: establishing relationships with employers and the authorities, queuing up in shops, buying and handling consumer products, activities in order to correspond to role expectations and to represent these roles publicly – all time-demanding activities which, depending on whether they are carried out by those who earn a lot of money or not, or whether they are carried out in societies of want or surplus, assume the most diverse forms.

⁷ Illich 1983.

- For both liberal and Marxist authors the application of extra-economic coercion in the recruitment and deployment of labour is often considered to be a deviation from the normal labour relation under capitalism. More detailed definitions of capitalism no longer rule out labour under duress as possible labour relations, such as for example in the labour of serfs, slaves, prisoners, deportees, as well as that of child labour or forced prostitution.

Forced sales-oriented labour, even if the pay is inadequate or is administered in the form of providing what is needed to survive, can be interpreted as a specific form of wage labour, to which the category of surplus value can be applied.

All the other forms of labour mentioned above cannot be adequately grasped with the concept of surplus value developed by Marx. The surplus value-relation is merely directed at the value transfer from the person carrying out the capacity to work (the male or female worker) to the person appropriating this capacity (employer). The appropriation of the value created by the male and female subsistence workers at no cost requires a specific analytical category as well as a specific concept. Here the transfer of value from the unpaid work of these people will be referred to as transfer value.⁸ This is intended to express how the creation of value in this instance does not occur within the framework of the paid wage labour relation, but in a mediated form. This mediation can occur in two ways, although both can be operative at the same time:

- 1) Realisation through family connections between unpaid work and wage labour
- 2) Realisation by combining different labour relations in the form of commodity chains⁹

1) Realisation of Transfer Value through Family Connections between Unpaid Work and Wage Labour

Free wage labour cannot exist without connections to forms of labour in which reproduction and care are provided. In principle this also applies to non-free

8 In earlier works I contrasted the 'surplus value' created by wage labour to the 'value transfer' from unpaid and underpaid labour relations; cf. Komlosy 2011. After careful consideration it strikes me as appropriate to use value transfer as an overlapping concept that includes surplus value from paid labour and transfer values from unpaid work relations.

9 The skimming off of value from unpaid work can also occur through their connections to labour rents and product rents; this connection will not be further explored here.

labour conducted under duress, even when the 'wage' is only administered in the form of food and accommodation. If a lord of the manor allows his serf, or a plantation owner allows his slave, to manage their own plots for self-sufficiency then this will reduce his spending. He thus participates in the values created outside of 'labour time' in the kitchen garden or the subsistence field. Not every employment of slave labour relies on the independent contribution of workers for their reproduction: if such opportunities are denied and if the lord's provisions are not sufficient, then the male and female workers will die earlier and will have to be replaced by 'fresh' reinforcements. In this instance the transfer value is taken from those households or communities from which the forced labourers (slaves) were recruited (bought or stolen).

Since the 1880s labour relations in the countries undergoing industrial development were shaped in such a way that indirect wage components came in addition to the labour wage, in which the entrepreneur participated in social security costs; more and more workers were able to purchase consumer goods and services beyond mere survival, with the result that a part of the unpaid care work carried out in the household could be purchased in the form of goods and services.

It thus actually looked as if the increasing commodification, under the pressure of the trade unions and the desire of the entrepreneurs for the emergence of a stable workforce and the interests of increasing purchasing power, could reduce subsistence and domestic labour to the minimum that in the last instance was conducted 'out of love' and thus did not need to be paid.

Appearances were deceptive: firstly, only a section of male and female workers were affected by it, even in the industrialised countries. The family wage was not conceived to reward the services performed by family households, but sought to make available to the household a budget framework for 'higher' needs which guaranteed the qualifications and loyalty of those who earned more and which, through the consumer spending associated with it, had a stimulating effect on demand. At any rate, in peripheral regions domestic and subsistence work remained a central aspect of survival; here wages were not aimed at allowing workers to participate in consumption to the same extent.

Second, the commodification of care provided by professional institutions with paid workers proved to be a tendency which was subject to cyclical fluctuations, that is to say, it expanded in times of boom and in times of crises was reversed again under the aegis of wage cuts and austerity programmes. Or, through the privatisation of social security, it only became accessible to those who can afford such care. The most extensive replacement of domestic and care work with professional forces took place in the real socialism of the

Soviet type by outsourcing childcare, feeding and care to company and state institutions; conversely the shortage economy forced the expansion of subsistence work in the form of allotments and stockpiling. At the same time, in order to procure day-to-day goods that were difficult to get hold of a considerable amount of work in the shadows needed to be carried out in order to secure access to scarce goods by maintaining informal relationships.¹⁰

Following Ilich, we refrain from viewing work in the shadows as a source of transfer value, because although this work must be performed so that wage workers and domestic workers can survive in alienated bureaucratic and consumerist systems, work in the shadows itself does not create any value that could be appropriated by a capitalist.

Just as male and female wage labourers are dependent on their connections with people who take care of their reproduction, unpaid workers require a connection with a wage income in order to purchase the goods and services necessary for life. Wage work and housework thus form an inseparable pair within which one aspect cannot survive without the other, and there is thus mutual willingness to make available money in exchange for care and care in exchange for money. In this way, somebody who employs a wage worker can always count on not only having access to the worker's paid labour but also to the labour power of those who carry out unpaid care work in the household. If we are dealing with a single-person household then the wage labour and care work are carried out by the same person; in this case the transfer flows from the ratio of unpaid work hours to paid labour hours performed.

Wage labour which as a consequence of informalisation, flexibilisation and casualisation is paid at a rate below the prevailing wage level plays a prominent role in the realisation of transfer value. The remunerated part of the labour contributes to the formation of surplus value. In the periphery, if survival is to be ensured, then the comparatively lower (and thus 'underpaid') wage income must be compensated for by the unpaid work of other family members. In the core, lower wages do not as a rule directly pose a threat to survival but merely to participation in consumption and social life. State social assistance also plays a role in compensation. Underpayment thus proves to be a particularly suitable key for the realisation of transfer value.

The key to understanding transfer value is therefore to be found in the combination of labour relations, which in the framework of the household causes entrepreneurs to receive access not only to the employment of paid

10 This kind of relationship work in the Soviet Union also operated under the name of *Blat*; cf. Ledeneva 1998.

workers but also to unpaid work. From the perspective of workers these income combinations are vital: they make available money to those performing unpaid work and in turn care for those who bring in the wage. Other variables in this economy of reciprocity, which forms the basis of transfer value, are the amount of wages, which are decisive for the extent and the nature of unpaid work, as well as the indirect wage components which an entrepreneur pays as social security contributions and in the form of taxes, which make it possible to supply a part of family care work through professional social services with paid workers.

The recourse to, or connection with, unpaid work performed within the framework of a household is not only mediated through wage labour. Self-employed workers (tradesmen, farmers, service providers) directly fall back on the unpaid work of their family members if these relatives carry out subsistence work.¹¹ They realise transfer value in their role as capitalists and at the same time make it possible for their relatives to gain access to money. However, it is also possible – and in many cases also appropriate – to consider small businessmen forced from the labour market and labour law into self-employment not as capitalists but as a section of the working class – even though they are not dependent on wages: from this perspective they fulfil an intermediary function between the unpaid work of their relatives and the contractors whom they supply more cheaply than others and in this way help to cut back on their costs. They make it possible for the contractors to realise transfer value without themselves generating surplus value for them. This constellation goes beyond the family context of combining incomes and embeds the realisation of transfer value in the combination of different labour relations in the form of commodity chains.

2) Realising Transfer Value by Combining Different Labour Relations in the Form of Commodity Chains

Goods, commodity or productive location chains are present when the production flow from the raw materials to the finished product is split up between several locations. This splitting up can occur within a single enterprise, which then becomes a multiregional or multinational corporation as a result. But it can also link up independent companies for the purchase of inputs, or it is formed by a

¹¹ If income levels allow it, however, small business owners and self-employed entrepreneurs hire paid servants/staff to carry out house and care work.

contractor who entrusts individual producers with partial processing steps or services and coordinates both the production flow and the composition of the components. The enterprises that control commodity chains can themselves originate in an area of production (commodity chains dominated by producers), from wholesale or from brand development (commodity chains dominated by buyers); they can be operative in these areas themselves or merely coordinate them as agents. The arrangement of production and marketing in a commodity chain that crosses locations, regions and states brings together the most diversely controlled production and labour relations; these differ not only in terms of production factors but also in terms of the costs and conditions of political regulation.¹² In this, borders play a central role to the extent that they maintain regional/national differences and in this way allow the enterprises that work beyond borders to utilise these differences as a dynamic element of cutting costs and maximising utility.

The positions within the chain differ with regard to the contribution to the creation of value performed by the labour activities on site; for this reason there is always a competitive relationship between the locations of a chain over the deployment of the most intensive value-creating components; in the interests of economic, labour market and fiscal policy, governments promote the deployment of the most high end production steps (i.e. those that are deployed at the high end of the chain and not the low end).

For the cross-border actors of a supply chain, the transfer effect results from the combination of locations with varying conditions for the realisation of capital. Their interests lie not in the convergence of these conditions but above all in the cross-border flows and movements proceeding freely: the addressees of demands to this effect are not merely the governments of the various states but in addition the inter-, supra- and transnational organisations whose policies contribute to states conducting themselves well in relation to the optimal functioning of commodity chains.

Depending on the technical production, marketing and organisational conditions of a chain, the enterprises which enjoy a position of control at the high end can profit from a series of appropriation of transfer operations:

- Transfer through the plundering of nature/the externalisation of environmental costs;
- Transfer through trading profits;
- Transfers and re-transfers of capital, interest, know-how, licenses;

12 Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (eds.) 1994; Komlosy 2011; Wallerstein 1983.

- Transfers resulting from trademark rights and control over the distribution structure
- Unequal exchange resulting from different positions in the value chain enables the locations with a higher share of research and development to gain a greater degree of control, logistics and processing as well as higher profits with their greater bargaining power.
- Whoever controls the whole chain does not in the first instance profit from the components of intense value creation but from the possibility of locating labour- and capital-intensive, standardised and know-how-intensive activities in the optimal location.

The above examples make it clear that the transfer concept in the sense of access to values created elsewhere has a very wide scope and is not restricted to capital gaining access to human labour, something which is foregrounded in this essay. Not all transfer processes in the framework of commodity chains are effective in regard to the creation of value transfer from unpaid work. However, an essential element of the arrangement of production and marketing in the form of commodity chains is the different proportion of paid and unpaid work performed at the individual locations in the chain. These differences are further accentuated by the various laws affecting labour, social policy, environmental regulations and profit repatriation. Among those at the low end they set in motion efforts towards upgrading in the direction of the value-intensive high end of the chain. From the perspective of the organisation as a whole, these efforts above all serve to create the differences in prices and wages within the chain, which is what makes it at all possible to attain profits, in ever new forms, and to thereby adapt the individual components to the changing requirements.

Labour relations are woven into the complex division of labour of global commodity chains and thus in practice are difficult to separate from the other component parts of unequal value creation. In general the following holds true: the transfer of labour activities from a so-called high-wage and high-tax country to a location with lower production costs occurs in the interest of reducing construction, rental, production, wage, training and social costs as well as in reducing taxes, outgoings and many other things. Higher transaction and transport costs will be accepted in exchange for this. Management, research and know-how-intensive tasks are left in the old (former industrial) countries; financial services are concentrated in international stock exchanges, the logistics of the contract award process allow regional hubs to progress to regional centres. Wherever it is a matter of paid labour relations in the form of wage labour in the enterprise's own subsidiary companies or in the form of contract

manufacturing through subcontractors and suppliers, the process involves the creation of surplus value. If products of differing proportions of surplus value are exchanged for one another then this can be interpreted as trading profit for the party that acquires a higher profit in the process. However, the profitability of goods chains is not based on a differential revenue resulting from the differing costs in split factor and commodity markets realised in exchange. Rather, this profitability counts on the systematic interconnection of production arrangements (with production networks) which are characterised by the varied composition of the labour force working within them. In principle, one will encounter a combination of formal, informal and unpaid subsistence work relations, in various forms, at every location involved in the process. The reproduction of, and care for, the formal and informal labour force through unpaid domestic and subsistence work links the surplus value of the former with the transfer value of the latter. All the while, informalised workers can only survive on their lower wages if they compensate for the lower wage income within the family with unpaid work or state social payments and in this way have transfer value pass to their contractors or customers.

A commodity chain links paid labour relations with underpaid and unpaid labour relations not merely within the framework of family relationships, which allow the capitalists access to family production and reproduction, but also within the framework of business (network) relations. The distribution of the production flow across individual locations takes into account the unequal arrangement of labour relations in the functional subregions of the world economy (understood as a tiered system within which positions and functions constantly change and therefore as a system which constantly reproduces inequality between the core and the periphery). Consequently, commodity chains represent a central category of analysis within the framework of world-system theory;¹³ recent research on production networks has refined the instrument in terms of corporate relations,¹⁴ as has more recent research on global labour history in terms of the diversity of the labour relations linked together by the chain.¹⁵ Integration into a chain also makes it possible for an independent producer carrying out a delivery assignment to create values which are transferred from the low end to the high end and – like in a cascade – ultimately to accrue, in a disproportionate manner, to the general contractor of the chain. On occasion the category of ‘self-exploitation’ is brought into the argument

13 Wallerstein 1983.

14 Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (eds.) 1994.

15 Van der Linden 2008.

for those self-employed people who supply so cheaply; since the value created through their labour (and that of their relatives) does not remain with them but partly shifts to the contractors through the chain, I subsume this transfer of value under the general concept of transfer value, even if here this is not mediated by a wage worker. Ultimately a quantity of transfer value can be found in every unequal exchange.

Reflections on Putting the Concept of Transfer Value into Operation

Putting into operation the concept of transfer value, which is intended to signify an appropriation of values from paid, underpaid and unpaid work, can take place at different levels.

The analysis of value(s) has a philosophical-ideological core. This level involves grasping social relations conceptually and developing a functional model for the process of the creation, appropriation and distribution of social values. The Marxist concepts of labour value, value and surplus value represent such a model. This model is one at a high level of abstraction which has no direct counterpart in social reality. Yet it makes available categories for grasping and ordering social contexts. However, value analyses also have an analytical-practical function in terms of understanding economics, society and politics. Here again this initially involves exploring functional relations, something that requires the development of concepts and models. On this basis quantifying calculations can be made for individual issues and areas as well for the entire system.

- At the microeconomic level the question of surplus value transforms into the calculation of profit.
- At the macroeconomic level, the values created by the enterprises flow into the total macroeconomic account (the social product).
- The unequal international division of labour finds reflection in the economic data (the structure of the sectors, the intensity of value creation, the balance of trade, balance of services, rankings in terms of macroeconomic indicators); but it also finds reflection at the microeconomic level when it comes to property relations, capital equipment, the level of technology and the organisational position of the company (management, research and development functions).
- The inequality of the international division of labour can also be grasped using the approach of the commodity chain, which integrates into the ana-

lysis all the locations that contribute to the production and distribution of a certain product. The differences in the allocation of jobs and wages, in the expenditure of labour, investment, value creation, returns, profits and taxes can, through microeconomic analysis, be embedded in the unequal and spatial structure of the world economy, where political power is also unequally distributed.

The detection and interpretation of business, economic, international and global economic affairs falls within the competence of the economic disciplines. Although there is great controversy surrounding the theories, models and methods which have given rise to different schools that do not communicate with each other, there is a consensus to the extent that when it comes to the economy, these schools deal with the output of paid workers within the framework of economic enterprises. Unpaid work, regardless of whether it is conducted in the family, at home, in subsistence production, in neighbourly help, in the form of giving and receiving or as work in the shadows – all of these are excluded.

Whoever takes these places of work and the creation of values seriously will have his or her hands full with the conceptual and analytical edifice of the economists, regardless of which school they happen to belong to. The economists do not merely ignore unpaid value production because they do not preside over any categories to detect and quantify such values; their models are so constructed that including these values in the sense of supplementing their models is often not possible at all or at least very difficult. It will therefore not happen without questioning and overcoming the old political economy and reformulating a new one that includes paid and unpaid, formal and informal productive activities alike in their mutual relationship with each other. The extent to which existing approaches can be expanded or classic analyses reducing the economy to gainful labour relations have to be overcome, is a highly controversial question amongst the critics.¹⁶

In my considerations I will restrict myself to the question of how the category of 'transfer value', which at the beginning was developed conceptually and analytically, can be put into operation.

¹⁶ For example, Christel Neusüß and Claudia von Werlhof originally began to build unpaid work into Marxist political economy but gave up on these efforts later. Cf. Neusüß 1985; von Werlhof 1978, pp. 18–32.

1 *Identifying the Sources of Value from Unpaid Work and Labour*

Here it is a matter of locating the various forms of work and labour, the different characters of work and labour, their contributions in all of their manifestations and behavioural patterns, and whether they can be replaced or not. In addition to this there are considerations on the dimensions of, and relations between, the various forms of work and labour in the context of long-term developments, short- and medium-term economic cycles, as well as of various socio-political relations.

2 *Quantifying the Sources of Value from Unpaid Work and Labour*

The quantitative determination of unpaid work makes sense because it creates awareness about the existence of value and its transfer both on the part of those working and those who skim it off (appropriate it). This holds true regardless of whether receiving money in return for these services is realistic or even desirable. Until now such questions were mainly discussed by the women's movement.

As the debate around wages for housework showed, in the first instance there was a need to define what should be considered to be included into remuneration. The opponents of wages for housework fought against the complete commodification of activities that are an integral aspect of family relations and to justify this they pointed to the loss of self-determination that would occur in the domestic sphere as a result of payment. For them value is created in domestic labour, care labour and labour geared towards fostering personal relationships; nonetheless these kinds of labour would evade both evaluation and payment, because they simply were not compatible with wage relations.

If remuneration is considered for certain unpaid work activities then the question arises of what the basis for the amount of the wage should be and who should operate as the 'employer' or the contracting party. It would suggest itself that such wages should be oriented towards comparable services that are paid for, such as the wages of a cook, somebody looking after an elderly person or somebody providing learning assistance, but this overlooks why these employees are ranked so low in the hierarchy of professions. Even if relatively low wages were used to calculate them, it is obvious that the housewife or househusband's claims to remuneration would break up any private or public financial capacity. One might consider whether housewives, househusbands or other family workers could not be replaced by workers who due to their status as migrants or lack of residence permits would put up with a wage that was even lower. At any rate, introducing payment would open up a Pandora's box of further problems, in relation to which the unpaid provision of services would perhaps be the lesser evil. We can practically study the different forms of

such secondary problems as the 'import' of wives (of whom it is expected that they happily carry out housework) or those looking after the elderly who are from peripheral regions (of whom it is expected that they offer a replacement for unpaid care work in the family in the most cost-effective possible fashion). The examples also show that the professionalisation of care work in the framework of various payment models is no utopia but already in full swing. With an unconditional basic income, all domestic and subsistence work would automatically be compensated, but the right to paid labour would also be obsolete.

Another approach to the problem lies in a different distribution of paid and unpaid labour within the family and within society at large. 'Half-Half' refers to the equal share of unpaid domestic and family labour by both spouses – a prerequisite for the equal participation of both in employment and social life. Building on the work of the pioneers, André Gorz or Jeremy Rifkin, the concept of 'mixed work'¹⁷ proposes the division of labour time into three time contingents devoted to the acquisition of money, work in the family and volunteer work in society respectively. Only gainful employment is paid; however, the labour time deployed in this employment must be such that time remains for work in the family and in society. The concept can also be combined with a basic income. Of course, mixed work would only be a social solution if all workers took part in a binding manner and they were not split up into mixed workers, those who only work in the family and those who only work for wages. If 'mixed work' is purely voluntary then we are dealing with de facto part-time work. The enforcement of part-time work for all could counteract people being split up, but how could it be realised?

If it becomes a general principle associated with the right to a job that brings wages which are enough to live off and which leave sufficient time for necessary and edifying unpaid work then it must break through the limits of a system based on capital realisation (profit). I consider it central to conceptually and experimentally play through variants to this effect on a quantitative level as well and in so doing to check the solutions which individuals, families and groups realise for themselves in terms of social feasibility, relevance and consistency. In this way it is possible to gauge which alternatives can be implemented within the framework of the system and which would require that framework to be changed.

In doing so, global inequality must not be overlooked. Assuming that a community was able to realise a complete social system of 'mixed work', in which labour and income were radically redistributed, then there is the question of

17 Brandl and Hildebrandt 2002.

whether this can be embedded into an international framework. Introducing a system of mixed work with guaranteed employment and a basic income for all on an economically sustainable basis would be one side of the coin. But what would the other be?

With regards to the distribution of resources worldwide an eco-social mixed work economy would have a moderating effect that would break down imbalances. How would such a system, if it is not to be an insular island, be able to prevent the import of products and services which are the result of long hours of paid labour – mainly badly paid labour – and even longer hours of unpaid work which keep down spending on food and consumer goods and which flow into the economy as cheap inputs to be processed further? Transfer value in the local system may indeed be neutralised, but imports from regions without a labour-sharing system would continue to feed underpaid or unpaid work outputs into the system through trade, the relocation of production and goods chains.

3 *The Sources of Value from Underpaid Labour*

Before we look at transfer value in the context of global commodity chains we should take a look at analogous considerations for underpaid labour. The women's movement also pointed to the value of this labour because women – as a result of being primarily assigned to the family – are paid less, regardless of what they specifically do. Underpaid labour is also discussed by workers from informal sectors, even though they mainly find little support for their demands for higher wages from the trade unions, which are mainly oriented towards the formal sector. The informal sector is regularly mentioned by the tax authorities when they point to the loss of revenue to the state, social insurance and workers incurred through the evasion of tax, registration fees and contributions.

Two levels must be distinguished in putting this into operation. First, the value transfer that accrues to the capitalist (or in the case of self-employment, the competitor) as surplus value, because underpayment allows for extra profit. In principle, when it comes to gathering and showing these extra profits then we can proceed in a similar fashion to unpaid work, namely by calculating the difference between direct and indirect wages and by working out the cost savings which accrue as differential profit. Second, in practice these informal activities are embedded in the household, which on the one hand sends workers into the formal sector of the economy where they can earn more money and, on the other hand, mobilises forces which can compensate for the lower income through unpaid subsistence activities. Underpayment is therefore not an independent phenomenon but a labour relation characterised by its com-

bination with other underpaid employment activities and with formal as well as unpaid work relations, which can be analysed by using the categories of surplus value and transfer value.

4 *Identifying and Calculating the Sources of Value as a Result of Goods-Chain Arrangements*

Combining several locations with different levels of wages, prices and regulations provides a number of opportunities to reduce costs and create values.

a) *The Unequal Distribution of Value Creation Added along the Goods Chain*

The absorption of value by outsourcing to, or attracting, cheaper suppliers results from the unequal division of labour within the framework of the commodity chains and accrues as profit for enterprises whose higher value creation is based on obtaining inputs and components of a lower value; they are accumulated by the enterprise that exercises total control over the individual positions in the chain and which as a result of trademark rights and distribution structures is in a position to draw a disproportionate share of value creation.

Research on individual enterprises, their international connections and on cross-enterprise commodity chains is in a position to work out the organisational basis that allows them to attain differential profits. Such research is confronted with an absence of information due to the lack of transparency in intra-inter firm relationships. Nevertheless research often succeeds in overcoming this through a mix of sources. When it comes to calculating the cost savings arising from the combination of different price or cost levels, then once again the question is raised of what calculation basis can establish the true costs.

- Calculating on the basis of the highest or even the average levels of wages and prices would see the costs of cheap wage/cheap price inputs rise enormously and make clear the extent of the value transfer from low-end to high-end positions in the chain. An increase in payment to the average, let alone the highest level, would be completely unrealistic from a business perspective; the debate is nevertheless suited to question consumer behaviour that is based on cheap wages and also suited to look for possibilities of ecologically and socially sustainable consumption.
- A calculation on the basis of the lowest price levels would mean that wages in the periphery and insecure working conditions would take hold in the core, which would cause mass poverty and a loss of purchasing power. Such a drastic reduction in payments is not in the interests of the entrepreneurs –

after all, it would rob the consumers of their purchasing power. This notwithstanding, the globalisation of commodity chains promotes a flexible adaption of working conditions in the core to those of the periphery, which questions the old 'achievements' of the workers' movement and the welfare state.

A socially just evaluation of labour is inconceivable within the framework of commodity chains which are based on inequality and the possibility of them combining. A solution can only lie in overcoming hierarchical, monopolised commodity chains, whether this be through returning globalised production to regional/local dimensions, in which all labour operations are performed under the same conditions, or whether this be through cross-regional commodity chains, whose arrangements are suited to their mutual social and ecological sustainability.

b) The Unequal Distribution of Value Creation as a Result of Unequal International Relations

The different possibilities of profiting from the uneven arrangement of locations in the international division of labour is closely associated with the institutional framework of the participating states, as well as of the political system. The differing political power of states to promote investments that create higher value on their territory and in this way to secure wages, incomes and fiscal competence for their citizens or residents must be incorporated into calculations of transfer value. Here, characteristics of a nation state can be used in the calculation; conversely, there is the question of which facts should be drawn on to characterise international imbalances and to what extent non-quantifiable power imbalances must also be incorporated.

c) Transfer Value from Unpaid Work within the Framework of Commodity Chains

Here there is a link with the above considerations regarding the embedding of wage labour in unpaid domestic and subsistence work, which makes it possible for male and female workers to survive, even if their wages are below that of the minimum needed to do so. Commodity chains disproportionately mobilise this unpaid work at the low ends, which are situated in the periphery of the global economy. The unequal international division of labour is thus also characterised by unequal quantities of paid and unpaid work exchanging with each other through the mediation of the combination of locations in commodity chains. This unequal exchange of quantities of unpaid work also finds reflection in the unequal balances of trade, services and value creation.

The inequality in labour relations thus indirectly touches on all of these areas. The differences in the mobilisation of unpaid work necessary for survival at the various stations of the chain are not restricted to wage labourers. Insofar as their position in the commodity chain forces them to disproportionately rely on unpaid subsistence work, it therefore also makes sense to regard self-employed entrepreneurs as creators of transfer value.

PART 4

*Marcel van der Linden –
His Intellectual Development*



An Encyclopaedist of Critical Thought: Marcel van der Linden, Heterodox Marxism and Global Labour History*

Karl Heinz Roth

Encyclopaedic thought has become scarce. This is not merely due to the tides of time. Its scarcity also results from the high hurdles that restrict access to the critical-encyclopaedic dialogue. Whoever wants to participate in this dialogue ought to be cosmopolitan and to have left behind them the horizons of the nation-state, Euro-centrism and trans-Atlanticism. Secondly, he/she ought to be accomplished in several disciplines and, in addition to being familiar with the socio-economic and historical professions, also have basic epistemological knowledge (and, of course, be able to communicate in several languages). But personal-political disposition also plays an important role: critical-encyclopaedic thought can only burgeon if it is committed to non-hierarchical, direct-democratic perspectives for society.

Marcel van der Linden presides over all these prerequisites to a considerable extent. By no means did they fall into his lap. How did he arrive at them, and how has his thought evolved? The following is an attempt to trace the main stages of his intellectual trajectory. In so doing I will focus on those aspects of this trajectory that open up new perspectives and that could therefore contribute to the further development of critical thought. Firstly, I will reconstruct the paths and the learning processes that put Marcel van der Linden in a position to appropriate the tools of an encyclopaedic networker.¹ After that I will go into the genesis of the principal topic areas within which he has moved for the past four decades: his cutting of the cord that tied him to traditional Marxism, his analysis of the international workers' movement, the expanded scope of labour history, the incentive for a globalisation of labour history which resulted from it

* Translated by Ben Lewis, March 2014

1 Until now my knowledge of this was rather fragmentary. Alice Mul, Marcel van der Linden's life partner, helped me here, and I am particularly grateful to her for that. In addition I would like to thank Thomas Bindl and Frederike Buda (Bibliothek der Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts) for their help in getting hold of the material, which on occasion was difficult to locate.

and the elaboration of its conceptual foundations. These five areas have coexisted in Marcel van der Linden since the mid-1990s and constitute the fascinating breadth and openness of his thought.

1 The Political and Intellectual Origins and Development of His Encyclopaedic Arsenal

Marcel van der Linden was born in 1952 into a well-off Dutch-German family. He spent his childhood and youth in Holland's Catholic south, in the province of Limburg. There, in Weert, he attended a grammar school that combined the learning of ancient languages with the sciences, and in 1971 he passed his school-leaving exams. He then decided to study astrophysics at the University of Utrecht. The legendary Dutch Council Communist and internationally renowned astrophysicist, Anton Pannekoek, was the inspiration behind this decision. Distancing himself from his conservative father and his Catholic milieu, van der Linden had already joined the Pacifist Socialist Party at the age of 16, meddling in local politics by way of critical newspaper articles. In addition he had already begun to publish book reviews in the weekly *Vrij Nederland*.

After his arrival in Utrecht, van der Linden became involved in the student movement. Since the natural sciences there – as elsewhere – were hardly affected by the new student awakening, in his second year he switched to the Faculty of Social Sciences, where the students and assistants formed the core of the revolts. He took part in the occupation of the Institute of Sociology and the Central University Building, and from 1974 made a name for himself as a founding member of the League of Socialist Sociologists (*Socialistische Sociologen Bond, ssb*) in Utrecht. A year before he had already joined the Dutch section of the Fourth International and so came under the influence of Ernest Mandel, the charismatic exponent of Trotskyism of that time. In this context he lived through a decade of an intense study of the social sciences, in which political practice and theoretical reflection were closely linked. He became a writer for, and editor-in-chief of, the theoretical journal of the International Communist League (*IKB*), *De Internationale*, as well as its magazine, *Klassenstrijd*. His reporting on current affairs covered the entire spectrum, mainly dealing with the big strike movements of the time in the transport sector and in the universities.² Yet he became increasingly involved in the fierce theoretical debates

2 Back then van der Linden's strike reports were also published in West Germany. Cf., for example, van der Linden 1980 [1979], pp. 85–105.

and programmatic conflicts that the majority currents of the Fourth International conducted with their dissident fringe groups.³ Yet all the while he did not at all shut himself off from other discourses and learning processes in the social movements. He joined a commune that had squatted a house – a move that was later ‘legalised’ by the city council. The whole of the radical left of these years kept company in this house, where Marcel van der Linden lived until 1985. No group or party initiative sought to dominate the others. Moreover, on account of its extensive social gatherings and parties, the squatters’ collective was very popular. Yet the celebrations were also accompanied by serious theoretical study and ambitious seminars. Van der Linden thereby acquired vast knowledge, which he passed on within the framework of the Federation of Socialist Sociologists. The 1970s thus represented a laboratory which decisively shaped van der Linden’s ability for open-ended research and for incorporating all conflicting arguments into his self-assurance based in the social sciences. Consequently, his attachment to the Fourth International, a thoroughly ‘honourable’ traditional left current, did not yield any disadvantages for him either. He parted ways with it as soon as he had realised that its fundamental models of argumentation were not doing justice to the complex reality of the time. In 1982 he resigned from the Dutch section of the 4th International, of which he was the General Secretary.⁴

In 1978 van der Linden concluded his studies in sociology by gaining a diploma. He became an economics teacher in a secondary school. Yet regardless of the pedagogical competencies that he had acquired as a tutor in the social sciences and as a seminar organiser for the League of Socialist Sociologists, this kind of professional involvement proved too narrow. He quit the teaching profession after three years and decided to take some time to clarify his broader perspectives by taking up a doctoral project. Thus, in the context of the decline of the social movements, there began a transitional phase in his search for identity. Van der Linden joined a theoretical journal founded by ex-Trotskyists in Antwerp, in which he published his reflections on the topic of his doctoral thesis – namely the question of how Western Marxism, and its Trotskyist cur-

3 Cf., for example, van der Linden 1979, pp. 25–8; van der Linden 1980a, pp. 28–33.

4 This activism was obviously characterised by strong doubts. This can be the only plausible explanation for the fact that, in 1975, Marcel also joined an undogmatic grouping by the name of ‘Paradogma’ that was active in Nijmegen and kept its distance from the parties of the left to pursue a rather more council-communist approach instead. In this group van der Linden got to know the West German historian and social scientist, Gottfried Mergner, whose critique of the deficiencies of the workers’ movement exerted a considerable influence on him.

rents in particular, had judged the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union that emerged from it.⁵ During this period of self-imposed unemployment he became acquainted with his life partner, the political scientist, East-Asian specialist and feminist social democrat, Alice Mul, with whom he lives to this day.⁶ He stepped up his preliminary work for the PhD project, but returned to professional life in 1983. He looked in several directions. In the autumn of 1983 a solution was found, which was to represent a decisive turning point for his further intellectual development: he was co-opted onto the International Institute for Social History, based in Amsterdam.

In 1983 the editorial board of the IISH's own journal, the *International Review of Social History*, had been advertising for a research assistant to help maintain their rigorous bibliographical focus.⁷ Van der Linden was awarded the contract and joined the editorial board as an adviser in October. This co-option represented a step forwards for him both professionally and intellectually, because now he had the opportunity to not only document the whole of world literature on the labour movement, workers' movement and social history, but also to comment on it in the shortened annotated form that is typical of the *IRSH*. He performed this task so well that he quickly took on more functions in the context of the advisory role he had been assigned and eventually, four years later, was appointed executive editor.

In addition, he was able to bring his skills to the area of organisation as well. When he moved up to the staff of the IISH through the Institute's journal, plans were afoot for an ambitious international colloquium, which was to be held in 1985 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the IISH. The colloquium was to explore the role of internationalism in the history of the labour movement from its beginnings through to World War II (1830–1940). Along with the IISH secretary, Marcel van der Linden was commissioned to plan, prepare and run the conference. The team decided to put into perspective the then dominant points of view related to the epochs, countries and organisations, to put on the agenda cross-cutting issues – colonialism and racism, cultural and symbolic history, internationalism and solidarity – and to permit only one single feature on the organisational history of the labour movement. The conference was a great success, and the results were published in 1988 in a two-volume

5 Van der Linden 1981, pp. 5–22.

6 They got to know each other at a seminar on anti-Semitism organised by the Utrecht Anti-Fascist Committee, where Alice Mul gave a talk introducing a discussion of the Balfour declaration.

7 On this, and on what follows, cf. volumes 28 (1932) to 32 (1987) of the *IRSH*.

publication, to which Marcel van der Linden not only added a bibliographical appendix but also a contribution that reinterpreted the rise and fall of the First International.⁸

With this he had delivered two journeyman pieces that marked him out not only as a circumspect documentarist of, and commentator on, international research literature, but also as an ambitious organiser of science who was able to achieve consensus with others and who, all that notwithstanding, did not hide his own scientific ambitions under a bushel. However, this talent for encyclopaedic networking also had to find another permanent field of activity. In this respect extremely fortunate circumstances were on his side. As he was growing into the IISH team, the whole institution was in a process of upheaval.⁹ The Institute had been bursting at the seams since the 1960s.

The number of archive and library users had increased to such an extent that a thoroughgoing reorganisation had become inevitable. In so doing, the previous assignment of the scientific apparatus to the thematic and country-specific main areas – the so-called cabinet structure – had to be abandoned in order to separate the archive and the library from the areas of research and, at the same time, to be able to expand the fields of research and to better coordinate them with each other. To this end, the new director general, the economic and business historian, Eric J. Fischer, put a team together onto which Marcel van der Linden was co-opted. The tasks were successfully dealt with, and now a new era began. Together with Eric J. Fischer, the archive specialists Jaap Kloosterman and the social historian Jan Lucassen, who was co-opted as Director of Research in 1993, Marcel van der Linden was amongst the most important sources of inspiration. All the while the newly crowned chief editor not only put his stamp on the Institute's journal, but was also instrumental in the reorganisation of its conference concepts. Since the research capacities of the IISH were naturally limited, the team opened up new fields of research to the Institute by embedding it in an elaborate 'system of consolidation', which began with workshops and – if they were successful – resulted in major international conferences. In this way, all active experts across the world could be involved in working out the respective issues from the outset.

The new procedure was tested for the first time in 1988. This involved bringing together international research on the emergence of the modern labour movement between 1870 and 1914. Initially an internal IISH working group agreed on the central issue: the influence of the respective labour organisa-

8 Van der Linden 1988, pp. 624–54; van der Linden 1988a, pp. 323–35.

9 On this, and on what follows, cf. Fischer 1988, pp. 246–55.

tions on their social base (and vice versa); for this purpose researchers were to be gathered from all the countries where workers' organisations had formed within the time frame to be analysed by the conference.¹⁰ In order that the contributions could eventually be used to clarify comparative questions, the envisaged authors were also presented with a questionnaire on the history of the origins and impact of the organisations and on the socio-economic, technological and legal-institutional framework. On this basis a first workshop with the aim of verifying this approach took place in January 1988. This was followed in February 1989 by a second meeting, at which several interim reports were revised and distributed to the authors of the reports from the various countries. In the following months, 28 national studies arrived. Europe and the U.S. were the focus, but there were also essays on the emergence of the labour movement in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina. The results were published in 1990 by Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn in a two-volume anthology.¹¹ The project improved the conditions for a comparative approach to labour history and integrated the traditional history of labour organisations into the context of their social and economic history in a manner that could easily be verified.

At the beginning of the 1990s it became increasingly clear that, following its reorganisation, the IISH had made a significant contribution to the renewal of international labour history. This was even more remarkable in that at this time other comparable institutions, such as the Feltrinelli Institute in Milan, had fallen victim to the turmoil of political restoration, or, as in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, were razed along with their party-political bearers. As a result, a new era of emergency began for the IISH, which in some ways was reminiscent of its early years, when the archives had to be rescued from the clutches of the Fascist dictatorships. However, its main activities remained focused on the further conceptual and institutional development of labour history. The result of this for van der Linden was that his fields of activity constantly expanded. His carefully planned international conferences, his co-option onto the governing bodies of international associations of labour and social history as well as his collaboration on an ever growing spectrum of journals serve as interfaces of his activities since then. In addition to his leading role in the IISH, in the 1990s he served as senior research fellow of the expanded research department and in 2001 replaced Jan Lucassen as research director.¹² As, in addition to this, he has

10 On this, and on what follows, cf. van der Linden and Rojahn (eds.) 1990, pp. XIV–XVII.

11 Van der Linden and Rojahn (eds.) 1990.

12 Cf. International Institute of Social History, Annual Report 2001, Amsterdam 2002, pp. 55, 77.

been Professor for the History of Social Movements since 1997,¹³ he has been able to integrate doctoral students into the IISH's research projects.

II Overcoming Traditional Marxism

These were great leaps forward – and they were increasingly leaps into entirely new outlooks. Yet these did not arise by themselves, but required systematic work on their conceptual premises and objectives. Here Marcel van Linden became involved in several levels of analysis, which gradually led him to globally integrated perspectives on labour history. The first precondition of this was a (self-) critical examination of the assurances of traditional Marxism, which of course included Trotskyism. In a motto with which he prefaced an article about the Trotskyist theory of the 'degenerate workers' state', he indirectly demonstrated the existential dimensions of this clarification process: 'In scientific work you can only love if you destroy, you can only preserve the past by negating it, you can only revere your master by contradicting him'.¹⁴

For him the central issue in this clarification process was assessing the political and economic character of the Soviet Union. The formal framework for this was provided by the work on his sociological dissertation concerning Western Marxism's critical confrontation with the Soviet Union since 1917, which he published in 1989 and – in revised and expanded form – in English in 2007.¹⁵ He opted for a genetic approach in order to be able to take into account the respective interpretative models which had come into being since the October Revolution, as well as in order to refer to the main stages of development in both the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc. In addition, he implicitly equated the term 'Western' with 'critically distanced' and in this way was able to incorporate dissident interpretations from within the Soviet sphere (the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia) as well.

The three central lines of interpretation that had emerged in the course of the discourse on the Soviet Union between social-democratic, Trotskyist, council communist and post-Trotskyist intellectuals formed the point of departure for his analysis: the concepts of 'state capitalism', 'bureaucratic collectivism' and 'the degenerate workers' state'. Van der Linden established that the

13 His inaugural lecture has been published: van der Linden 1999b.

14 Epigraph – from a text by Gaston Bachelard – in van der Linden 1993, pp. 112–17, here p. 112.

15 Van der Linden 1989; German edition: van der Linden 1992. In what follows I refer to the study as it is found in the last US-American edition that was updated and revised by the author: van der Linden 2009.

approach of the exponents of all three currents was incompatible with Marxist theory. In his view, significant aspects of the character of the commodity and the dynamic of competition in capitalist society which were not detectable in the Soviet Union precluded the concept of 'state capitalism'. For him, the interpretation of the Soviet Union as a 'bureaucratic collectivist' society, which according to its theorists represented a new social formation between capitalism and socialism, failed in particular in its unsuccessful attempt to prove the existence of a stable ruling class. But for him the Trotskyist concept of the 'degenerated workers' state' was also inadequate because it separated the spheres of production and distribution from each other in an improper fashion and conceded political hegemony and control of the system of distribution solely to the Soviet Union's ruling bureaucratic elite, while the working class continued to have the means of production at their disposal. Moreover, Trotsky had deemed the Soviet system to be far too transient, and his later followers were unable to overcome this deficit.¹⁶ In addition, for all their differences, the orientation of these three strands of interpretation was too monocausal and unilinear to do justice to the complex reality of the system.

According to van der Linden, he had increasingly come to recognise the methodological insufficiency of these three schools of thought from the beginning of the 1970s. Since then, proceeding from the approach of a few heterodox theorists and groups of the New Left, he realised that the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc that came into being after the Second World War was a precarious 'non-system' in which neither the bureaucratic elites nor the working class controlled the processes of production and reproduction: economic planning was largely fictional and the working class had become set on responding to being shut out from political and economic participation by producing substandard goods and by systematically refusing to work. Thus after the transition to more complex economic forms a kind of hybrid economy was created. This economy had to collapse in the foreseeable future – especially because of the competitive pressures from the world market.

One and a half decades after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, van der Linden returned to these issues by publishing key texts on the Marxist debate over the nature of the Soviet Union.¹⁷ In an extensive introduction he deepened his reflections on the 'non-system' approach that had emerged since the 1970s. This approach was mainly represented by the British social scientist, Hillel Ticktin,

16 Marcel van der Linden further elaborated on the latter interpretation in a later article: van der Linden 1993, pp. 112–17.

17 Van der Linden (ed.) 2007.

and was characterised by its sound empirical evidence.¹⁸ In the debate with Ticktin and the discussion papers of the British group *Aufheben* he came to the conclusion that, particularly since the Stalin era, there had been an extremely violent dictatorship in the Soviet Union, which as a latecomer had uncoupled itself from the world market in order to press ahead with a kind of primitive accumulation. Yet for him the Soviet Union had only partly succeeded in this, eventually falling into a state of 'hybridisation' that resulted in an irreversible process of social disintegration.

But what about the historical protagonists who, in 1917, led the revolutionary movement to political revolution and established the Soviet regime? As of yet van der Linden has only commented on the Bolsheviks in a cursory fashion, but all the while he did actually have a position. In an essay on Lenin and Leninism that made up the balance, he made it clear that this core tendency of Bolshevism only had fairly precarious conceptual ideas at its disposal.¹⁹ Lenin and his followers had appropriated the doctrines of the Second International, which had been shaped more than anybody else by Karl Kautsky, and they did so through the mediation of the intellectual father of Russian Marxism, Georgi Plekhanov. Their goal had been the establishment of the 'state of the future', which would combine the entire potential of the economy and its labour power into a central syndicate, and establish a regime of production committed to the large-scale industrial organisation of labour. Yet this projected goal could only be transferred to Russian conditions if they conformed to those in the developed capitalist West. But this was in no way the case. According to van der Linden, Lenin therefore devoted a considerable amount of effort towards reinterpreting the Tsarist regime's unstable state of transition between forced industrialisation and underdeveloped agriculture as a capitalist economy with a developed internal market. Under these conditions, the revolutionary intelligentsia that was until then committed to the renewal of the village communes could instead be committed to the strategic options of German social democracy and build the party as an instrument for the development of proletarian class consciousness. After the completion of this programmatic process of formation the conspiratorial elite party would carry out the revolution and bring the backward political conditions into line with the highly developed regime of capitalist production, which was understood to be the basis of socialism.

18 Ibid., pp. 7–46, here pp. 34ff.

19 Marcel van der Linden 1993a, pp. 31–48. This essay is the heavily cut printed version of an essay that Marcel van der Linden had written for the *ITH*.

Enough on the conceptual premises of Leninism. According to van der Linden, these were by no means to be equated with Bolshevism itself. Van der Linden stressed that within the majority tendency of Russian Social Democracy there were always wide-ranging differences of opinion. Moreover, for van der Linden historical research had shown that the revolutionary intelligentsia in no way directed things – as Lenin had demanded they did. Workers represented the decisive element that provided the movement with continuity. In addition, in the weeks of the revolution the Petrograd Party Committee displayed extraordinary flexibility and adaptability, without which the success of the uprising would have been inconceivable. The ‘steeled’ cadre party ‘unified’ by democratic centralism is therefore a construct of the late 1920s – and unfortunately one that has proved to be very powerful historically. All in all, for van der Linden Leninism represented an ideology in a double sense. Firstly it was characterised by serious internal contradictions, of which the commitment to a proletarian revolution in the service of upholding authoritarian-hierarchical relations is a particularly striking one. Secondly, Leninism was only the ‘cover of a revolutionary apparatus’, which, as the historical evidence available today shows, ‘in practice functioned differently’.²⁰

Marcel van der Linden tested the validity of Marxism on other, less exposed, terrains as well. Marxism’s proponents came off better for it. Above all he enriched findings in the evaluation of Marxist historiography on the Netherlands. The occasion for doing so came in an anthology he edited on the reception of Marx’s theory in the Netherlands.²¹ In his introductory article, he initially summed up Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s analysis of the seventeenth-century capitalist ‘model nation’, which had risen to a global centre of capitalist global trade following its detachment from the Hanseatic League and the uprising against Spanish absolutism.²² Although Marx and Engels commented on this only sporadically, they did, however, understand the decisive socio-economic causes of this process: the blossoming of merchant capital as export industries, the conquest of colonies whose resources can be robbed, and the rise of the credit sector to finance the expansion of trade and trade wars through government bonds and taxation systems, which in turn were used for the proletarianisation of the craftsmen and small farmers. With this, commercial capital was successful in setting in motion a wide-ranging primitive accumulation because it controlled all major components of the economy.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

²¹ Van der Linden (ed.) 1992.

²² An English version of this essay was published as van der Linden 1997a, pp. 161–92.

In the second part of his introduction, van der Linden then dealt with the historiography of Dutch Marxism, which had experienced its first heyday between 1890 and 1910. His verdict was ambivalent: on the one hand new insights were gained into the socio-historical aspects of the Dutch Revolution and into the ambivalent character of the commercial capital-dominated social formation; on the other hand the previous political and economic 'input' of Marx and Engels remained unknown, making a socio-economically sound analysis of the rise and fall of Dutch mercantile capitalism impossible. This situation was further compounded by the lack of a basic knowledge of economic theory. In the last section of his introduction van der Linden then confronted the historical studies conducted by the first generation of Marxist intellectuals in the Netherlands with the state of research achieved by international Marxism at the beginning of the 1990s. By doing so he was able to point out that the Dutch historians' hypothesis on the ambivalent character of the bourgeois revolution in the first phase of manufacturing capitalism had been completely vindicated. In classifying Dutch mercantile capitalism within the history of the world system, Marx and his subsequent followers had thus cut quite a figure.²³ This is certainly true of many other areas of social practice and socio-economic theory as well.²⁴ As a consequence the strategic fiasco of Kautskyanism and Russian social democracy becomes particularly evident.

Even if he later returned to the hypotheses of traditional Marxism on several occasions, he had overcome the barriers to knowledge he recognised within it during the second half of the 1990s. Following this he began a kind of re-reading, in which he studied the history of the heterodox, marginal currents. In this context he studied council communism,²⁵ and in particular the French *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group,²⁶ which in the 1950s had functioned as an outstanding laboratory of the undogmatic new left. Until then he had only become

23 In the anthology there is a meticulous study of Marx's analysis of Dutch mercantile capitalism, in which the authors pose the question of the extent to which Marx had adequately received the state of knowledge achieved in his time. It is of crucial importance to anybody who wants to grapple with primitive accumulation and the main components that bore this development: Lourens and Lucassen 1992, in van der Linden (ed.) 1992, pp. 430–54.

24 For example, the theory of the 'combined and uneven development' of the capitalist world system developed by Hilferding and Trotsky strongly influenced Marcel van der Linden and prompted further deliberations. More on this below.

25 Van der Linden 2004, pp. 27–50.

26 Marcel van der Linden 1997b, available online at: www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/S_ou_b.htm?200621.

aware of this group, which was founded in 1949, through its critical analyses of the development of the Soviet bloc. He owed much to his appreciation of their analysis and struggles for position. He became familiar with the debates between Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis on the relationship between the avant-garde and autonomous self-organisation. However, he was even more fascinated by Castoriadis's intellectual development, which revealed several shortcomings in Marxist analysis itself.

There are only a few intellectuals of Marcel van der Linden's generation who have so systematically and earnestly dealt with the problematic aspects of going beyond their education in Marxism. The tenacity and openness of his approach is impressive. That on occasion insufficiently far-reaching interpretations slipped into his work is as understandable as the persistence of gaps within it. For example, in his study of the Soviet Union he only dedicated half a page to the Operaist camp's controversial confrontation with Bolshevism,²⁷ limited himself to the discussion of just a single publication²⁸ and overlooked contributions to the discussion from West Germany.²⁹ Yet for me perhaps the most important analytical gap is that while van der Linden critically analyses Trotsky's theory of 'the degenerated workers' state', in his publications he has nonetheless still not gone into Trotsky's own role in War Communism (1918–21). Yet today critical historical research is agreed that Trotsky too was deeply influenced by Karl Kautsky's deterministic state-ism, and that this conceptual paradigm beguiled him into a rigorous course of action in which he – as with the introduction of collective forced labour to remove transport bottle necks, but also with the military crackdown on uprisings of workers and peasants – in many ways anticipated the Stalinist change of course in 1929/30.³⁰ The Amer-

27 Van der Linden 2009, pp. 192 ff.

28 This was the study by Rita di Leo (di Leo 1970), which was published in Italy in 1970. The position of the author is vague and ambiguous. Van der Linden assigned it to the Maoist-inspired state-capitalist theorem. In contrast, in the discourse of the Italian Operaists it was understood to mean that Bolshevism had failed in the task of disentangling itself from agrarian-socialist traditions, of freeing the Soviet Union from its backwardness and of transforming it into a genuine workers' state. This interpretation was linked to a quite positive assessment of Lenin, which the author, who belonged to the CPI-Wing of Operaism, shared with its other tendencies. This affirmative attitude was rejected by the West-German Operaist groups. It led to the working out of a self-standing analytical framework that in many respects anticipated the results of contemporary social historical research.

29 Cf., above all, Ebbinghaus 1975, pp. 3–15; there is an abridged reprint in Ebbinghaus 2010, pp. 303–14; Ebbinghaus 1983, pp. 201–16; Ebbinghaus 1994, 3, pp. 69–96; 4, pp. 50–97.

30 Cf. exemplarily for many other critical analyses of this topic: Kößler 1993, pp. 161–71.

ican anarchist, Emma Goldman, who was familiar with the early years of the Soviet Union from her own experience and in 1938 reproached Trotsky for protesting a little too much against the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy,³¹ is absent from Marcel van der Linden's analysis. However, these critical objections in no way detract from the enormous results that Marcel van der Linden has worked so hard for in order to be able to rid traditional Marxism of its hypotheses and to open up new horizons.

III The Rise and Fall of the International Labour Movement

Following these processes of clarification, in the late 1980s Marcel van der Linden turned to the history of working-class organisation and its various socio-political branches. From the outset two aspects were crucial for him: firstly, prioritising looking at the international activities of the workers' organisations and their attempts at association, and secondly opting for a methodological approach that he himself characterised as 'comparative historical sociology'.³² It already became clear that opting for these two cornerstones was a fortunate choice in his first apprentice pieces, which he presented to the 1985 IISH Conference and at a conference in Paris two years later on the paralysis of the Second International as a result of World War I. In these papers he developed an amazing stringency in his conceptual approach, something that – for all his additional expansions and differentiations later on – he has retained until this day. He does not skimp on introductory definitions or explanations interspersed within the text wherever he considers them to be necessary. Proceeding from this, he works out clear temporal periodisations in order to be able to structure the formulation of his questions, as in his 'pre-national', 'national' and 'transnational' stages of labour history. The third cornerstone of his work is his consistently applied comparative approach. Initially this was restricted to the labour history of the transatlantic nation states and empires, but soon it was expanded to the other regions of the world. There is also an ability to think in multi-causal contexts and variable clusters and thereby overcome unilinear thought – something that he learnt from the historical sociology of the 1970s and 1980s, especially Charles Tilly.³³ This made it possible for him to

³¹ Goldman 1938.

³² 'Currently he is working on the comparative historical sociology of worker organizations'. 'A note on the author', in van der Linden and Thorpe (eds.) 1990, p. x.

³³ Charles Tilly (1929–2008) belonged to the IISH's scientific advisory board and in particular took part in the research department's conceptual debates at the beginning of the new

reconstruct the options for action that the actors in the workers' organisations presided over from their respective socio-economic and power political contexts. In this respect, van der Linden remained at heart an historical materialist and first and foremost dealt with the logic of the material interests that are of vital importance to the rise and fall of workers' organisations and the different segments of the exploited classes they represent.

This boundless curiosity marked out van der Linden's work from the outset. This was only possible because he had left behind him the preconceived certainties of Marxist determinism just as he had the preferences for particular doctrines, worker categories and forms of organisation that were associated with it. Whether he was dealing with social democracy, revolutionary syndicalism, communism, free or Christian trade unions, or whether he was looking at skilled workers, artisans or day labourers: all institutional, socio-structural and ideological variants of the workers' movement of the long nineteenth century that lasted through to 1914 were put to the same test and were confronted with questions that until now no other historian has asked of them. Beyond this, until today this openness towards his objects of study is accompanied by a willingness to learn and to establish a dialogue: over and over again van der Linden allows others with different opinions to have their say as well and leaves it up to his listeners and readers to decide on the extent to which they wish to follow his explanations and interpretive approaches or to opt for different perspectives.

As a result, it is not surprising that his interventions into the different debates contributed to a significant revival in labour history discourse. In his article on the rise and fall of the workers' organisations of the First International, he first of all made clear that its initial focus on the metropolis of London was due to the rapid development of transnational capitalism and its effects on the economy, infrastructure and the nation state. From the 1830s on a proletarian subculture had evolved there, which encompassed many nationalities and which drove forward the development of the first cross-border, international organisational structures from London outwards.³⁴ The First International Workingmen's Association (IWMA), founded in 1864, by no means played a leading role in this. Its social composition was mainly made up of craftsmen, whose trades were threatened by new technological developments such as the sewing or woodworking machine. Nevertheless, there were links

millennium. Van der Linden acknowledged Tilly's methodological and scientific achievements in an informative obituary: van der Linden 2009a, pp. 237–74.

34 Van der Linden 1988a.

with other associations based on the factory system. While the internationalist activities of IWMA concentrated on financial and propagandistic support for continental craft cooperatives that were coming into difficulties, the British associations mainly established trade unions in those countries from which the British industrialists wanted to import cheap labour so as to undermine the strike-struggles for higher wages, shorter working hours and control over working conditions. Substantial material interests thus led to the internationalisation of the first workers' organisations in the transatlantic region. Van der Linden characterises them as 'pre-national': as soon as the national organisations had consolidated themselves (which again was something that originated in Britain) the international connections became less important. With these views he significantly cut against the grain of existing historiography regarding early working-class internationalism: the IWMA largely lost the pioneering status that had been ascribed to it and the factional dispute fought out between Mikhail Bakunin and Karl Marx in its ranks became of little importance to its social base and their concrete everyday problems.

In his second contribution, Marcel van der Linden grappled with the national integration of the European working class in the decades preceding World War I.³⁵ This question was controversial because it broached the socio-economic backdrop to the collapse of working-class internationalism that had paved the European ruling elites' way to World War I. In their attempts to clarify this epochal event, historians had until then mainly concentrated on the behaviour of the leading groups of the workers' movement and contrasted the readiness for war on the part of the British, German and French workers' organisations with the protest attitude on the part of the Russian and Italian workers' organisations. Van der Linden now turned this view around and examined the issue of the integration or non-integration of the working classes in these countries in seven problem areas: the state of development of national capital accumulation, the international prestige of the respective nation state, the development of inter-regional links (railways, the post and so on), the state of the public education system, suffrage, the role of the army and the extent to which social security systems had been established by 1914. He compiled descriptive statistics and investigation findings from the research literature for each of these seven socio-economic and power political fields. He came to the conclusion that for the working classes in Germany, Britain and France there were influential factors promoting immigration, even if they were by no means fully developed and in many ways ambivalent. In Italy, on the other hand, these were

35 Van der Linden 1988b, pp. 285–311.

partially absent. In tsarist Russia they were absent to a considerable extent. This was mainly due to the fact that both of these countries still found themselves in a particularly conflictual state of economic take-off and did not preside over any functional educational or social-security systems, while the prestige of their armies lagged far behind that of their Western European counterparts. Thus during the outbreak of war the leaders of the workers' organisations had not at all set themselves against the options and mentalities of their respective social bases. Moreover, Marcel van der Linden could demonstrate that the view of the American historian, Günther Roth, regarding the extent of the 'negative integration' of the European working classes, a view that until then was considered to be groundbreaking, was in need of critical examination: in none of the countries studied by van der Linden had the integration of the working class advanced as far as Roth had assumed, and besides, the extent of integration from country to country varied significantly.³⁶ Additionally, van der Linden stressed that due to their ambivalent character, the mechanisms of integration into the nation state – in education, for example – could be completely reversed again under different historical constellations.

After this successful start, he was able to set about expanding the formulation of his questions to include a comparative overall history of workers' organisations in the transatlantic region. In so doing his analysis of the internationalist aspirations of the trade-union movement occupied him particularly for a time.³⁷ Following his initial thoughts on the 'pre-national' character of the rise and fall of the IWMA as a consequence of a transitional phase to a 'national' variant of internationalism lasting roughly until 1890, he then developed his stages model further. He placed a stage of 'self-discovery' before the 'pre-' or 'sub-national' stage, in which the workers' movement defined itself as a socially and economically progressive class and crystallised out of the amorphous mass of the proletariat and the traditional petty bourgeoisie. This was followed by the 'pre-national' stage (1850–70) with which we are already familiar and a transitional phase (1870–90) in which the 'national' stage of trade-union internationalism emerged, something that lasted into the 1960s. It was characterised by a dual structure, namely by the existence of international secretariats for different professions and by the formation of great international federations of the national unions. This relatively long stage was followed by a second transitional phase which has lasted until today. In this stage trade-union internation-

36 Ibid., p. 311. Also, cf. Roth 1963.

37 Van der Linden 2000, pp. 519–40; here taken from the revised version: van der Linden 2003, pp. 155–72; Unfried, van der Linden and Schindler (eds.) 2004.

alism was confronted with new challenges: for van der Linden decolonisation, the new international division of labour, massively increased flows of capital across national borders, the formation of new political and economic blocs, the turn away from the Keynesian model of full employment and the collapse of 'real existing socialism' had changed the conditions of action so radically that if trade-union internationalism was to be preserved then new responses along the lines of an 'international' structure would henceforth have to be found. In so doing it was obvious that the solutions to be reached should be oriented towards historically verified material interests. Ultimately, trade-union internationalism had always involved preventing wage dumping from the working classes of other countries through their self-organisation into trade unions; bringing into line work and pay conditions in the transnational chains of value creation with the high-wage segments fought and won by the workers; avoiding competition between locations of production practised by the internationally operative large enterprises; and enforcing a comprehensive regulation of working conditions within the international and supranational institutions. The fact that these objectives were sometimes accompanied by political forms of solidarity (such as the boycott of the South-African apartheid regime in the 1970s) was for van der Linden just as important as the symbolic expressions of internationalism, despite the fact that these had excluded the workers' organisations of the periphery and semi-periphery for far too long. But besides this there were hardly any reasons for exuberant illusions. In spite of some Marxist rhetoric in its early phase, the international trade-union movement never had a focused perspective of going beyond the system, something that was also true of those organisations which, like the International Transport Workers' Federation, had voted in favour of repealing the dual system in favour of uniting the international associations under one roof. In this respect, from van der Linden's point of view the decisive 'internationalist' representation of workers' interests could – and can – certainly go hand-in-hand with determining the free and collective negotiation of working and pay conditions, as well as with representation.

In parallel with this, Marcel van der Linden examined the political counterpart of the trade-union movement using the example of European social democracy.³⁸ When confronting this problem area he arrived at some insightful results which could also be of major importance for understanding current development trends. By way of an introduction he wrote that the barely man-

38 Van der Linden 1998, pp. 161–86. The essay is based on publications in Dutch (1995) and German (1996).

ageable literature on the national differences between the European social-democratic parties was unanimous in noting its continuing loss of members and voters, and as a result of this, from the 1970s onwards, the conclusion was repeatedly drawn that its days were numbered. In order to test this hypothesis, which he personally had doubts about, he subjected the nine largest Western- and Northern-European parties³⁹ and – separately – their significant Southern-European counterparts (the French, Italian and Spanish parties) to a comparison that encompassed the history of these parties from their origins through to the present with the aim of identifying their most important structural similarities. He discovered strikingly congruent stages of development between the Northern-European parties. In the beginning phase, which stretches back to the 1870s, these parties had combined a pragmatic programme of reform (universal suffrage and improved social standards) with a long-term perspective of socialism; yet the means of how to arrive at this were missing and therefore – in spite of all the myths to the contrary – these were reformist workers' parties from the outset. Then, after a turbulent transitional stage during the 1930s, this was followed by a first metamorphosis, which was characterised by the proclamation of methods of economic planning and counter-cyclical employment programmes. The Northern European parties thereby committed themselves to 'social Keynesianism'; yet for van der Linden they had only transformed into programmatically disclosed 'parties of reform with a working-class appendage' in the course of the 1950s and 1960s, that is to say, this transformation had been completed without these parties losing their links to the working-class milieu. Since the 1970s a second metamorphosis then came about, which had been enforced by the socio-economic and socio-psychological transformation of the time: the nation state's regulatory systems had been weakened by the internationalisation of commodity and capital flows as well as by the formation of new economic and political blocs; the social-democratic media fell victim to television, the privatisation of the media industry and the structures of the traditional working-class milieu were eroded as a result of the processes of individualisation – released by mass consumption – which were at the same time embedded in a transformation of everyday culture impelled by new experiences of imminent danger (environmental crises) and social movements (the women's movement in particular). If they wanted to survive, the social-democratic parties had to find an answer to these challenges. According to van der Linden, there were three alternative ways of doing this: firstly,

39 Namely the social-democratic parties of Scandinavia, West Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland.

opting for a more advanced variant of social Keynesianism within the framework of the process of European integration; secondly to dispense with the welfare state's redistribution processes and make far-reaching concessions to the side of capital in order to represent a certain residual amount of social sensibility; and thirdly replacing the abandonment of the material interests of the lower classes with new libertarian-democratic offerings. When van der Linden was thinking through these policy scenarios towards the end of the 1990s, the social-democratic parties to the north of the Alps had not yet bid farewell to social Keynesianism. In contrast, their three Southern European counterparts had already turned their backs on it. Unlike the Northern-European parties they had, after much controversy, only finally agreed on a welfare state perspective at the end of the 1970s, but abandoned this in favour of a harsh course of austerity a few years later, so that the two metamorphoses practically coincided. This made it clear where things in the North would end up as well as soon as the parties there came to control the levers of political power once again. At this time van der Linden could not foresee the grave consequences of this social-democratic change of course towards low-wage policies and austerity. Aside from a few exceptions such as the Italian PSI, the European social-democratic parties have survived. But the price was high. In Europe this innovation on the part of ruling capital was to a significant extent initiated and implemented from within the workers' movement itself and thereby, in connection with the downfall of the 'Bolshevik' opponents of European social democracy,⁴⁰ the points of reference to the 'reformist' milieu of working-class culture were lost as well.

It is quite conceivable that even though he did not publicly discuss the significance of this, he probably suspected it. Perhaps it is precisely this context that explains his interest in the historically important alternative which had been making its mark against the dominant trends in the labour movement since the turn of the twentieth century in the form of revolutionary syndicalism. Together with the Canadian labour historian, Wayne Thorpe, he dedicated an extensive anthology to this movement, which rapidly established itself as a standard work.⁴¹ In the introduction, van der Linden and Thorpe opted for a deliberately broad perspective, which encompassed the most important self-determined workers' organisations and those committed to direct action in

40 As far as I can see, van der Linden has not dealt with the history of the Communist counterpart and competitor in a similarly systematic fashion. He has only written a contribution on the first founding stage of these parties. Cf. 2003a, Chapter 6, pp. 85–94.

41 van der Linden and Thorpe 1990.

the transatlantic world, facilitating an overview of their development from the beginning of the century through to the 1930s. In doing so the authors succeeded in gaining new insights into these groups' social composition, internal structures, the logic of their forms of struggle and the reasons behind their rise and fall.⁴² In her contribution to this volume, Angelika Ebbinghaus analyses this rise and fall in greater detail. I can therefore limit myself to the observation that the authors explain the fall of revolutionary syndicalism as resulting from the massive state repression that followed the end of World War I and the change to the welfare state which came after this in the medium term. However, the authors by no means rule out a return of its agenda under different historical and socio-economic constellations.

IV The Internal Cohesion of the Working Class: Mutual Benefit Societies and Co-operatives

Maybe it was a coincidence that, at the beginning of the 1990s, Marcel van der Linden crossed the boundaries of a structural and institutional history of the international workers' movement and ventured into new territory: the archipelago of mutual benefit societies, labour exchanges and producer/consumer cooperatives. Already in the nineteenth century, Pierre Joseph Proudhon and Peter Kropotkin had noted that collectives for mutual assistance represented elementary instruments for surviving the vicissitudes of life and a way of stabilising employment opportunities and daily needs, shielding the proletariat from cyclical crises and the destructive tendencies of capital accumulation.⁴³ Van der Linden's IISH colleague Jaap Kloosterman probably incidentally assisted in the birth of van der Linden's interest in this subject. As a senior exponent of the Institute, Kloosterman was in constant contact with the mutual insurance associations of the workers' movement and one day asked for van der Linden's expertise on the history and significance of these funds. Van der Linden set to work and this matter of duty became a topic that increasingly fascinated him and one that he has since never let go of. His first comparative overview was published in 1990,⁴⁴ and two years later, under the aegis of Kloosterman, an international conference took place in Paris, at which experts from

42 Ibid., pp. 1–24. Between 1990 and 1992 the text was published in German, Japanese, French and Spanish.

43 Proudhon 1865; Kropotkin 1908.

44 Van der Linden 1990, pp. 169–79.

around the world reconstructed the legacy of elementary proletarian self-help, which had been almost completely marginalised in twentieth-century labour history, and investigated its various branches, some of which are active to this day. Four years later van der Linden edited a conference volume with revised contributions.⁴⁵ Yet he was by no means content with simply providing the introduction to the volume that he had been asked to write,⁴⁶ but investigated the strands of the proletarian self-help movements that were not discussed at the conference. Besides this he developed a systematised overview and finally inquired into their potential (or already long-existing) points of contact with the present.⁴⁷ His primary focus in doing this was to reconstruct the voluntary mutual benefit societies that protected the proletariat from the risks to its existence. These societies were established in the early phase of the labour movement by workers and artisans in particular, although the highly skilled segments were by no means always dominant. The societies initially had a direct-democratic constitution: a manageable group of a dozen members, one hundred at most, paid their savings into a common fund. Everybody decided in common on the management of the funds and the provision of emergency assistance. The focus was mainly on funeral payments and generating medical expenses. Pensions did not matter then because life expectancy was still relatively low. All of the risks to the worker's existence could not be covered by the mutual benefit societies later on either, and their exclusive character rendered them unstable and prone to competition. Often the mutual benefit societies sought to compensate for these disadvantages by expanding the number of their members, by branching out geographically and by establishing regional or national umbrella organisations. Although in general their members even then still retained – and also made full use of – their decision-making authority, the social and solidaristic character of the relief funds was lost as a result of their bureaucratisation. Moreover, from the end of the nineteenth century powerful competitors were arriving on the scene: the large companies' welfare departments and the emerging welfare states. Gradually they covered all risks to the existence of the proletariat, yet because of their coercive character and the accompanying loyalty obligations they destroyed the self-determined and self-governing character of the original mutual benefit societies once and for all.

45 Van der Linden (ed.) 1996.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–38.

47 Van der Linden 2008, Chapter 6, pp. 109–31 (revised version of the introductory chapter from 1996); on consumer cooperatives cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, pp. 133–49; on producer cooperatives cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 8, pp. 151–69.

Ultimately, the consumer cooperatives were unable to assert themselves against the capitalist environment they found themselves in either, but often these did not begin to erode until the 1960s. As with the mutual benefit societies, voluntary members paid into a common fund, which was used for the purchase, and subsequent distribution, of food. Their social bearers were free wage labourers, small tenant farmers and self-employed workers who – as with the mutual societies – could only have minimal savings if they were to participate in these institutions, which were also self-governing. The advantages of working-class households becoming involved in them were obvious: high quality food could be purchased at much lower prices. When the consumer cooperatives reached a certain size they could also make up for fluctuations in family incomes through credit. The occasions that led to the establishment of consumer cooperatives were manifold. Frequently the impulse came from the mutual benefit societies that were already in existence. Sometimes the knowledge that strike struggles could be fought out for longer if there was a collective recourse to discounted food also played a role. If the goods were sold above cost price – which was by no means always the case – then the resulting surplus could be periodically distributed to the members, used as credit for members, invested in the further expansion of the cooperatives or used for solidarity purposes. With this the consumer cooperatives were accorded significant protection against the capitalist environment surrounding them. Yet according to van der Linden, in the last instance they too acted exclusively, cemented patriarchal structures through their membership that generally consisted of the male heads of households and led to rejection from other segments of the working class, for whom independent petty trade often represented a source of subsistence that was crucial for their existence. This confrontational position was however scotched by the emergence of capital-intensive retail chains and supermarket corporations. Not only did small corner shops disappear in the wake of these corporations but the large consumer cooperatives did too. Following a process of adjustment and erosion that often lasted for decades, these cooperatives either had to be liquidated or be absorbed by the new supermarket chains: they had nothing to counter the price dumping and the range of products of their financially powerful competitors.

On the other hand, for van der Linden the producer cooperatives proved to be surprisingly resistant. This is astounding, because the deposits of their members – also free wage workers, self-employed workers and small tenant farmers – were usually modest to say the least. This often meant that they were only able to establish themselves in segments of the economy in which the requisite amount of machines, tools and equipment is low and the finished products can be quickly turned over. Yet if producer cooperatives succeed in establishing

themselves in the segments of the economy to which they are suited – construction, agriculture, graphic design and so on – and in democratically overcoming the conflict between commanded and commanding labour – through rotation, sufficient free time for further joint training – then they often have stable future perspectives. Their solid internal structure then allows them to operate independently, to protect exclusive collective property against external investors and lenders and to maintain the viability of the direct-democratic system of decision-making at all levels. And since the situations that favour the establishment of a producer cooperative frequently recur, especially in unstable times, there are enough reasons to enter into and collectively shoulder the comparatively high level of risk with scarce savings in the present as well. Producer cooperatives are, and were, mainly established following lost strikes and/or as a way of overcoming persistent unemployment. Even self-employed male and female workers join together in cooperatives over and again in order to eliminate the putting-out capitalists that exploit them. They can also help to provide survival perspectives for ethnic and social groups that are discriminated against in the labour market. An additional reason that regularly comes into consideration is the need for a non-hierarchical and self-determined lifestyle. To this day all of these factors represent a strong counterweight to the capitalist environment that repeatedly resorts to discriminatory measures in order to curb, and eliminate, the cooperatives. Thus the mutual benefit societies and the consumer cooperatives and the persistent tendencies towards their dissolution balance each other out to this day: while it is precisely the successful cooperatives that fail over and again due to internal and external influences – the employment of additional wage workers without voting rights and the incursion of investors for example – new productive cooperatives are coming into being across the world and are encouraging others to emulate them.

In his own drive to typological systematisation, a few years ago Marcel van der Linden drew up an insightful interim balance. In so doing he expanded the field of investigation again to now also consider the forms of mutual aid that can predominantly be found in the poorer regions of the capitalist world system.⁴⁸ He now also addressed labour mutualism, the rotating saving and credit funds of migrant workers, the savings and loans associations and the often unclear interrelations between them, as well as the structures of the mutual benefit societies and cooperatives with which we are already familiar.

48 Van der Linden 2005a, pp. 183–210; revised edition in van der Linden 2008, Chapter 5, pp. 81–108.

In addition he attempted to classify the mutualist archipelago by means of its similarities and differences, distinguishing between planned and contingent, or rotating and non-rotating, forms of application.

However, missing in this synopsis was a further component of the lower classes' institutions of reciprocal aid: house-building and tenant cooperatives. Alongside the producer cooperatives, nowadays these are the most important keystones which the lower classes use to shield themselves from the destructive tendencies of capital accumulation. Other cooperative forms often find essential support in these associations, and above and beyond this they can also be considered as a discrete material basis for social movements against the capitalist system. This defensive-offensive dual structure in their social practice points to the question – which van der Linden did not discuss – of where we are to situate the world of mutualism. Mutual benefit societies and co-operatives are primarily characterised by commodity-money relations and consequently are part of the capitalist social formation. On the other hand, they already eliminate fundamental characteristics of capitalist dynamics because the profits gained have a pure surplus character. These profits no longer serve the expansion of capital for its own sake, but are used – as long as the cooperatives genuinely operate as direct-democratic, egalitarian redistributive and non-hierarchical structures – to put into operation the necessary reproduction funds or to permit an expansion of the daily needs of the participating households. They are thus still part of the system, yet at the same time they create the first material preconditions the lower classes require to transcend the limits of the system and to head for a society that is democratic and egalitarian. In turn this of course requires that they leave their enclaves and re-appropriate the public goods robbed from society by capital accumulation. It is precisely at this interface that many house-building and tenant cooperatives are located. They have frequently emerged from district struggles and squatter movements and have assumed the form of cooperatives in order to gain permanent structures. In this role they protect their members against the excesses of land and property speculation – often for decades at a time. They can therefore be regarded as particularly striking transition zones to non-capitalist perspectives.

v Labour History Expanded

While Marcel van der Linden was dealing with all of transatlantic labour history's visible and underlying branches, their collective subject was becoming increasingly discredited. The rise and fall of the workers' organisations, includ-

ing their self-governing livelihoods, was being predominantly determined by white men who had fought and gained the relatively secure status of 'free' wage labourers exclusively for themselves. This hegemonic position within the exploited classes undoubtedly had its drawbacks. Working-class households had a patriarchal structure. They made female reproductive work invisible and encouraged structures of domination over women, children and the elderly within the family. Male-dominated workers' organisations disregarded the interests and lifestyles of the day labourers, the proletarian small-scale self-employed, the agricultural workers and migrants of both sexes. To a certain degree this was also true of the social revolutionary segments of the workers' movement, such as the revolutionary syndicalists. In addition, it was suspected that this exclusive, and at the same time exclusionary, character of the hegemonic subject that is the worker had something to do with the ambivalent role of Marxism, the worker's leading doctrine, historically: was it not the case that in Marxism too the emancipatory moments for overcoming the boundaries of the system were bound up with aspects of repression, which suggested authoritarian structures of thought?⁴⁹ The list of complaints from the new social movements that came into being in the 1970s, particularly from the new women's movement, was long, and there was something of a problem with the 'old' history of the working class and its organisations. On top of this came the capitalist (self-) transformation of Maoism and, at the end of the 1980s, the collapse of 'actually existing socialism' and the Soviet bloc. These exogenous factors considerably exacerbated the internal crisis of labour history and the voices of those who declared it to be 'finished' became more numerous.

Although Marcel van der Linden had long cut the cord to the traditional Marxist left, these serious upheavals in the scientific and political environment could not fail to have an effect on him. On the contrary, he listened to them, studied their critical contributions, classified them and reviewed the new topic areas that they opened up. In some ways things overlapped with the (self-) critical reflection he had already carried out. However, far more things were new territory to him, and this was a productive challenge to van der Linden's encyclopaedic approach.

Collective Worker Resistance

Before he ventured into the new terrain, however, he drew up an interim balance sheet, which at the same time was an attempt to answer a kind of existen-

49 On these reflections, cf. the contribution to this volume by David Mayer and Berthold Unfried as well.

tial question: what is the point of continuing to busy oneself with the history of the subaltern classes? Fortunately, he quickly found the answer. The oppressed and exploited classes are the genuine adversaries of power and exploitation in all its manifestations, for where there is power there is always resistance. By offering collective resistance, the subaltern classes not only defend their material right to exist, but always point to perspectives for a more just world. Behind the multifaceted manifestations of collective protest lie elementary social needs for social security, social justice and 'respectability' as a secularised form of dignity.⁵⁰ To satisfy these needs, the oppressed and exploited classes develop typical forms of action. However, these forms are always bound to specific historical contexts. All the while these must take into account certain perceptions of legitimacy, preside over sufficient resources (activists, money, free time, means of communication and so on), be equipped with a suitable 'repertoire' of experience and proven forms of action and understand how to reactivate 'memories of earlier struggles still preserved in the collective memory'.⁵¹ According to van der Linden, it was by no means easy for the historian to find his way in these areas. Since the written tradition mainly bears the mark of rulers and oppressors it was not only necessary to go against the grain – such as in dealing with colonial uprisings or the great mass struggles of modern wage workers – but also to cleanse them of their prejudices, verdicts and misleading conceptions of progress. Yet even more important than that is to investigate the small and everyday forms of collective resistance, because in contrast to large-scale 'public' actions which are quite rare and sporadic, these actions pervade the daily lives of the exploited and document a continuum of oppositional differentiation that is key to understanding the 'internal' social history of the subaltern classes. All the while, however, its faults must be kept in view and soberly assessed, because the often ambivalent experiences of these classes can re-establish mechanisms of exploitation and oppression anew.

Since his first programmatic essay in 1993, Marcel van der Linden has repeatedly dealt with the origins, forms of manifestation and objectives of collective worker resistance.⁵² In so doing he has been able to synthesise the world's research literature in a manner that, to my knowledge, is unparalleled in its density and clarity of classification. His essays on the strike movements and

50 Van der Linden 1993b, pp. 334–52, quote from p. 349.

51 Ibid., p. 351.

52 He collected his publications on this, along with several as of then unpublished manuscripts, in a section of *Workers of the World* (van der Linden 2008) entitled 'Forms of Resistance': Strikes (Chapter 9, pp. 173–207); Consumer Protest (Chapter 10, pp. 209–18); Unions (Chapter 11, pp. 219–57); Labour Internationalism (Chapter 12, pp. 259–83).

consumer protests in particular provide a comprehensive overview of the interplay of the motives, forms of articulation and socio-economic effects of collective resistance, in which all important segments of the class – from slave labour through to highly qualified wage workers – have their say: their informal and discreet forms of work refusal, their collective exit from work, ‘machine breaking’ and syndicalist sabotage practices, but also strikes as temporary work refusal with all their degrees of intensity and forms of development. In addition he presented a concentrated synopsis of consumer protests: the targeted boycott of products, the selective boycott of non-labelled goods (as in today’s ‘Fair Trade’ campaigns), the collective reduction of rent, food and energy prices and travel fares as well as the dynamic crossovers to the self-determined annulment of market mechanisms by collectively acquiring living space (squatting) and food (‘food riots’). Precisely at this level the continuity of the forms of action and their associated collective goals throughout the centuries is astounding, as are the internal relations between the consumer protests and the forms of resistance at the level of the workplace.

The Working Class and Racism

Following this affirmation of the subaltern classes’ articulation of the forms of resistance, Marcel van der Linden turned to their ambivalence. In the process he thematised problem areas with which he was partially familiar, yet on which he had only expressed himself sporadically in incidental remarks. Thus he was long aware of what racism means: an ideological ascription. It constructs a specific social collective that defines itself as superior and differentiates itself from other groups in society. As a consequence, racism constructs, in different historical times and spaces, a physical or genetic other, which is perceived to be a negative counterpart of the self. In contrast to nationalism and ethnocentrism, which also produce differences, racism carries out the exclusion of this other in order to be able to rule over it. This ideology of domination came into being at the beginning of European expansion, i.e. over 500 years ago, when the whites violently remodelled the world of the blacks in a manner that overwhelmed everything. This ideology subsequently consolidated itself as the legitimising basis of colonial rule. There were also adequate answers to the question of why racism had survived the demise of colonialism and the slavery that was associated with it. But why did racism persist with such intensity in the labour relations of modern capitalist societies? This question was intensively discussed in the aftermath of the social movements of the 1960s, and the American New Left, which was particularly affected by this issue, has provided the widest variety of answers to it since then. Some point to the existence of dually segmented labour markets: by being able to fall back on

the cheaper and underemployed black population, the employers were able to systematically squeeze the wages and working conditions of white workers. This approach sounded plausible, but upon closer inspection it showed significant weaknesses. It therefore seemed more plausible to assume the existence of completely divided labour markets, which had been in existence for some time, in which the high-wage sector was allocated to the whites and the low-wage sectors to the blacks, and which forced the employers, for reasons of competition, to increasingly replace expensive labour with cheap labour. In turn, a third objection was raised to this outlook, according to which there had always been divided labour markets in US capitalism. After two generations the immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe who were being discriminated against always managed to rise up to the higher segments. However, black people were denied this because they had been deprived of the prerequisites to do so as a result of the political, social and cultural discrimination they faced. In the long run the divided labour markets became solidified. In their efforts to reduce unit labour costs therefore, management and sectors of industry could, to varying degrees, fall back on the cheap labour of the blacks and thus permanently put pressure on the high-wage sector of the whites. If this analysis was correct, then white groups of workers only had two alternative courses of action in the face of the permanent threat of being displaced by the blacks: they could deny them access to the labour markets they controlled (exclusion, restrictions on immigration, protectionism, caste formation and racial barriers (colour bars)). Or they could seek to equalise wages and working conditions through the enforcement of minimum wages, the establishment of joint trade unions and a common struggle to prevent the divided labour markets from being politically and culturally cemented.

That was the state of the debate when, at the beginning of the 1990s, Marcel van der Linden turned to the problem of the racial division of the working class.⁵³ He realised that thinking about this opened up completely new territory in working-class historiography. But could the findings that were predominantly taken from America be readily generalised? The answer could only be provided by experts working in this field of research from across the world. In order to press ahead rapidly, the management of the IISH gained the Foundation for Historical Racism Studies (Stichting Historische Racisme Studies) as a cooperating partner and prepared an international conference, which took place in 1991 in Leiden and Amsterdam.⁵⁴ In this case as well,

53 Cf. van der Linden and Lucassen (eds.) 1995, pp. 9–19.

54 Cf. on this, and on what follows, *Ibid.*, pp. 15 ff.

the conference was excellently prepared by an elaborate position paper, by a definition of the basic category of 'labour market' that included the most important aspects of labour relations and by restricting the topic so as to do justice to the practical possibilities of organising the conference. The contributions focused on three precisely defined geographical-historical problem areas, which in all cases discussed the relationship between Europeans, and their descendants, with the 'others'. The first discussion concerned constellations where – using the example of the USA and Brazil – slave-labour relations dissolved into free labour markets, or where formerly unfree workers tried to enter free labour markets. In the second thematic bloc there was an examination of societies where white settlers subjugated the indigenous populations and thereby created new labour markets, which were mainly characterised by racial segregation. Third, constellations were discussed, using the example of Britain and the Netherlands, where stable labour markets had existed for centuries, and which had been confronted with large and momentous waves of immigration since the end of World War II. The revised findings of the conference were published by Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen four years later.⁵⁵ They provided summary overviews of this new topic area too, which were excellently suited for further-reaching comparative analyses. Their outlook on the frequently unbroken effectiveness of racist mechanisms of segregation gave no cause for optimism. Racial barriers can only be overcome if workers rely on their mutual support in the workplace and beyond.

Free and Unfree Labour

The confrontation with the racist segregation of the working class opened a vista on the mechanisms of differentiation which reach beyond the construction of the 'other' and which are used over and again by business managers and regulatory authorities in the labour market 'in order to carry out the practice of "divide et impera"'. Above all, the dichotomy between free and unfree labour fell under these mechanisms, which have been ingrained for centuries. Marcel van der Linden soon realised this and also integrated his institutional environment into the exploration of the new territory. This time he teamed up with the British agricultural sociologist, Tom Brass,⁵⁶ in order to prepare an international conference aimed at clarifying the relations between free and

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Tom Brass was a lecturer at the University of Cambridge and editor of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*.

unfree labour. Personally he initially trod on familiar territory by providing a contribution on the history of forced labour in the Stalinist Soviet Union for the conference on 'Free and Unfree Labour' in 1995 and for the pamphlet in preparation for it, which he put together with Tom Brass and Jan Lucassen.⁵⁷ In this he summarised the eyewitness accounts and written records compiled by the Russian Memorial Group and by historical research following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the period following the transition to forced collectivisation and accelerated industrialisation (1929/30), at times up to ten per cent of the working population were interned in concentration camps (the gulag). There were mainly men between 35 and 50 years of age. They were mainly employed in large construction projects (3.5 million people), in the mining of non-ferrous metals (1 million people) and in the forestry and timber industries (400,000). A second key area of unfree labour was made up of the forcibly resettled national minorities (Poles, Balts, Ukrainians, Bessarabian and Muslim ethnic groups) who, although they were not arrested and received the customary local payments, were not allowed to leave the places of residence and employment assigned to them. In parallel with this, however, the non-interned and non-deported majority of the farming and industrial workers fell into a situation that increasingly turned them into unfree labourers: in 1930 unemployment payments were abolished and all those capable of working were required to do so. Eight years later work books were reintroduced and informal forms of resistance (absenteeism and so forth) were criminalised. The following year, social security benefits were made contingent on the duration of employment and in 1940 it was generally punishable for people to change jobs on their own initiative. Thus within ten years a labour regime was created, by which free labour relations were transformed into a three-tier system of unfree labour.

Following this orienting overview, van der Linden took a closer look at concentration camp labour. He came to the conclusion that, against the backdrop of the increasing disenfranchisement of all labour relations, it in no way represented a 'deviation' from these relations but rather the disciplinary core of the Stalinist labour regime: gulag workers (*zeks*) could be deployed wherever nobody else wanted to work. They were extremely mobile. Indiscipline and absenteeism could be tackled rigorously, and this acted as a beacon for the threat of force against all the non-interned segments of workers. In addition, the ruling bureaucracy could significantly limit the production of consumer goods as well, because the '*zeks*' possessed almost no purchasing power. Yet

57 Van der Linden 1993c, pp. 19–30; van der Linden 1997c, pp. 351–62.

this almost unrestricted usability of the interned also brought disadvantages. The forced labourers had no motivation to work at all and thus as a rule could not be used in complicated machinery work. Their working capacity was comparatively low. The need to monitor them continuously caused considerable unproductive costs, and in the medium term demographic consequences – up to seven million men were interned in the gulag in their generative phase of life – played a considerable role. As a consequence, the gulag system was abandoned again in the late 1950s, following the completion of extensive industrial development.

In sum it did not seem far-fetched to consider the system of gulag forced labour to be slave labour. In order to clarify this matter, van der Linden compared it with the slave labour that had prevailed in the Southern United States until the 1860s. The similarities were obvious: in both cases, the forced labourers were completely without rights, carrying out the simplest manual work. But the differences overwhelmingly spoke in favour of a common classification as well. First of all, in the US the costs of acquiring work slaves (whether on the slave markets or through natural reproduction) were considerably higher than in the Soviet Union, where they constituted a kind of cheap booty: accordingly, in the last instance the 'human capital' embodied in them was handled in a more hands-off fashion. Second, food rations were lower and tied to the slave's working capacity, an unusual procedure in the Southern states of America. Third, it was generally more possible for surviving gulag prisoners to regain their freedom. Fourth, they were state property and, unlike in the Southern states of the USA, were not part of a private entrepreneur's inventory and, fifth, they did not produce for the world market like the US-American slaves (cotton, tobacco and so forth) but were employed to construct the Soviet Union's industrial infrastructure. Sixth, gulag slavery in Soviet society was not – yet – accepted as a normal state of affairs, while the plantation and domestic slavery of the American South was considered to be 'natural'. If we finally consider that in the first instance US-American slave labour was characterised by its complete lack of rights, then there could no longer be any doubt that forced labour in the gulags also amounted to slave labour in all of its main aspects. As van der Linden stated in his conclusion, it completely corresponded to the logic of a system of accelerated industrialisation playing catch up with other powers, which in the case of the Soviet Union was driven on in particular by exogenous global economic factors – technological imports in exchange for agricultural exports, the consequences of the Great Depression and so on. It also represented 'primitive accumulation', in which the immediate producers were separated from their means of subsistence and production and proletarianised in an extremely violent fashion.

This was an explosive and illuminating contribution to the conference and its empirically oriented focus, but for van der Linden this was more than a chance to present a case study. From the first part of the conference, which was dedicated to clarifying the theoretical issues, he had hoped to see a binding canon for the conceptualisation of the connections between unfree and free labour relations. Yet this did not come to pass because 'free' wage labour itself was not examined as a historical category, but dealt with merely as a normative benchmark. In his second contribution he thus turned the question around and presented a closing position paper on the reasons which had led free wage labour to become, alongside domestic subsistence labour, the dominant manifestation of dependent employment in developed capitalism. Why was chattel slavery or serfdom not dominant in modern industrial production, even if they had by no means disappeared and can, under certain conditions, become more clearly visible again? This unusual question could only be conclusively discussed if the significant features of 'free' wage labour were clearly defined along with what differentiated it from unfree labour.⁵⁸ This necessitated an examination of some theorems of political economy, but also of the historical origins, the normative enforcement, and the paths taken, in the spread of free wage labour.

First, the analytical premises in a nutshell (I will discuss them, along with some other methods, in more detail in a later section). From van der Linden's perspective, capitalism tends to subject ever greater sections of humanity and nature to the laws of the market and to transform them into objects of exchange, commodities. For him this phenomenon not only manifests itself geographically, but also results in the continuing transformation of our daily lives. Ultimately, everything that previously was never produced for commercial purposes would be turned into objects of trade and speculation. Human labour capacity is also subjected to this process of universal 'commodification'. Fundamentally this manifests itself in two different forms, namely in the form of free wage labour or chattel slavery. In the case of slave labour, labour power is sold in the form of the sale of the person, and as a rule this person is sold for life. In the process the slave loses his human qualities and becomes added to fixed capital like cattle or machines are. In contrast, the free wage worker remains the owner of his labour power and periodically rents – not sells! – it to an employer. In contrast to the assumptions of Marx and the Marxists, most slave labour is just as compatible with capitalism as it is with free wage labour, in which the labour capacity of the person who owns the labour power is only

58 Van der Linden 1997d, pp. 501–23.

transferred to the employer for a limited period of time. Historically, the capitalist social formation is dominated by these two main types. However, since there is no unilinear relationship between the type of exploitation and the social formation, the development, spread and decline of the respective form of exploitation is contingent on specific environmental conditions. However, slavery as a mass phenomenon lost much of its importance in the course of the nineteenth century. Consequently, for van der Linden there must be a kind of 'historical upper limit' to it. In the historical process there obviously exists a specific 'field of possibilities' and particular parameters, which tend to favour one form of exploitation or another and which cannot be explained by the usual theories of evolution.

Following these fundamental considerations, van der Linden discussed the international research literature on the origins of free wage labour. There was already wage labour in pre-capitalist society, but the historical actors always hired themselves out as people alongside their labour power, and as a rule they did so on a seasonal basis or for a particular period of their lives. Casual agricultural workers and the craftsmen of the ancient civilisations and the Middle Ages belong to this group, as do the craft apprentices subordinated to them and above all the mercenaries of the ancient armies. Wage labour was thus predominantly carried out as additional employment and on the whole had a mere intermittent and random character. Unfree labour relations, particularly in the form of slave labour, were dominant wherever continuous work had to be carried out.

Yet how in the transition to the capitalist social formation did the general spread of free wage labour come about? There exists extensive research literature on this too, but van der Linden was far from convinced by its findings. Many authors claim that technological innovation is the decisive driving force because it made the coarse, and predominantly manual, labour of the slave dysfunctional; others emphasise the formation of modern central states with their new possibilities of disciplining labour; still others refer to the emergence of large reservoirs of surplus labour. For van der Linden, all these factors undoubtedly facilitated the spread of free wage labour but were not able to necessarily explain it logically and cogently. By replacing, for example, the whip and resale as instruments of labour enforcement with material incentives, many industrialists in the Southern American states succeeded in making their slave labour-based factories profitable. Thus there had to be other parameters to the game, and logically it was obvious that these were quite different for the employers than they were for those dependent on being employed by them. In order to be able to set them apart more precisely, van der Linden distinguished between 'strategic considerations' and 'behavioural moments' for both sides.

The employers began to warm to wage labour as soon as it could be obtained cheaper, more flexibly and more easily than slave labour; this trend was supported by changes to regulatory conditions, such as in changes to the law, as well as by humanitarian considerations. But the option of free wage labour was by no means always self-evident for those dependent on employment either. The desire for improved living standards undoubtedly always spoke in favour of free wage labour, but if the state administration was weak then this desire could be tempered by the paternalistic need for protection; in addition there were psychological factors such as human dignity and justice. Non-economic factors also play a role in explaining the spread of free wage labour relations that should not be underestimated when it comes to the dichotomous 'possibility fields' of unfree labour versus free wage labour.

But this model does not yet sufficiently explain why free wage labour eventually prevailed in the developed capitalist countries as a normative value. Obviously in this case too economic and psychological/moral factors had to interact, although the resulting vector should by no means be seen as a one-way street, as shown by the example of German Fascism. For van der Linden, there was an economic cost-benefit calculation at the outset: if the supply of free wage labour constantly increased at the expense of slave labour, then the acquisition and exploitation of the latter became more expensive. This shift in the balance between the two main forms of exploitation, however, was in turn due to macroeconomic factors: the more that capitalism, starting from textile production, expanded to the manufacture – and subsequently to the automated production – of the means of production, transport and communication (Department I in the accumulation of capital) the more it became dependent on the complementary development of the consumer-goods sector (Department II). However, this macroeconomic equilibrium was in turn dependent on the expansion of mass purchasing power, and here the increased purchasing power of the free wage labourers came into play. The decisive precondition of sustainable capital formation was therefore the proletarianisation and commodification of the pre-capitalist lower classes. And since it was this precondition, it could form a normative value that was already latent within the market economy anyway. Markets can only function if there are reliable contractual relations between the buyers and sellers of the goods exchanged for cash, and if the market participants are aware of the medium- and long-term consequences of their actions. The right to formal equality, personal freedom of choice and justice is thus written into commodity relations, and this, for van der Linden, explains the fact that commodified labour too is normalised as free wage labour – irrespective of the fact that its actors may have escaped serfdom and bondage, they have attained their freedom at the cost of their dependence

on the arbitrariness and unpredictability of the labour markets. In this respect, the struggle for the 'emancipatory decommodification of labour power' has lost none of its present significance.

Capitalism and Slave Labour

Nevertheless, under certain conditions slave labour always remained an option for capitalist development, as, for instance, is shown by the example of 'primitive' accumulation in the Soviet Union; however, one should also bear in mind current trends to reintroduce debt bondage and slavery in some regions of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. What about the preconditions for this? The socio-structural and historical issues bound up with them have occupied Marcel van der Linden over and over again and have not let him go to this day. Their importance to his further intellectual development is obvious. They thus imply more than a mere case study that deciphers the connections between free and unfree labour in concrete terms.

In a first step, van der Linden once again examined the economic cost-benefit aspects which, from the point of view of the employer, encouraged the acquisition and exploitation of slave labour.⁵⁹ He could not easily explain why things so frequently turned out in favour of this extreme form of unfree labour: for example, even Adam Smith, the founder of classical political economy, had pointed to far more efficient forms of the modern patrimonial rule, namely the mobilisation of small tenant farmers who regularly paid natural or money rents; van der Linden thus had to fall back on socio-psychological explanatory models. For van der Linden, ultimately to this day, social-scientific, historical and economic research has not been able to unambiguously explain the preference for slavery. Moreover, the fact that there were at least three specific variants of slave labour is still all too often overlooked: firstly there was the monitoring of unskilled labour by the lords, as in the sugar cane harvest; the equally direct monitoring of qualified slave labour, for example in the servicing of the sugar cane presses on the plantations; and the waged slaves, who are particularly important to this analysis, who received a premium (*peculium*) and were not directly monitored by their masters. Considerations of cost then resulted from this broad and at the same time differentiated spectrum of exploitation, which existing research has only partially reconstructed:

First, the problem of the costs of procuring slave labour. For van der Linden, these were comparatively high and in the classic plantation economy of the Southern states of America made up at least a third of total investment. In

59 Van der Linden 2007d, pp. 160–279; van der Linden 2008, Chapter 4, pp. 62–78.

comparison, the costs of recruiting free wage workers were significantly lower; yet since these workers could leave their jobs again at any time, the money needed to hire workers had to be stumped up on a much more frequent basis.

Second, the costs of training slave labour. In general these too turned out to be disproportionately high, because the slaves were abruptly and violently thrown into an unfamiliar working environment with the result that they needed a considerable amount of time to learn their job in the highly specialised agricultural cycle.

Third, the costs of monitoring slave labour. The aims behind the control of slave labour are quite similar to those in conditions of free labour, for here too it is a question of guaranteeing a reasonable quantity of output of sufficient quality with minimal wear to the instruments of labour and the means of production. But since the slaves were particularly uninterested in delivering this, the slave owners had to deploy overseers who either monitored the entire labour process or concentrated on inspecting the required output. As a rule the output of labour was examined on the basis of predetermined daily tasks, such as in the working of a particular area of arable land; the more developed was the division of labour the more difficult it was to allocate the particular components on an individual basis. In contrast, the continuous monitoring of labour output was strongly influenced by the intensity of agricultural production: for example, in large-scale cereal production the costs were ten times as high as in the small-scale cultivation of tobacco or cotton fields. So as to increase the effectiveness of their work assignments, the overseers could fall back on a wide-ranging arsenal of coercive measures which constantly fluctuated between threatening gestures and actual violence, including corporal punishment, imprisonment, torture, resale or even murder. Since these negative sanctions often provoked resistance and sabotage and, moreover, resulted in hard work but by no means decent labour output, when it came to qualified operations or ones where output was difficult to gauge, these sanctions were always complemented by incentives and rewards. As a result, over the years the slaves could deposit savings, which they then used to buy their freedom. Yet the slaveholders set the price at which a slave could buy his/her freedom so high that they made extra profit and could then buy new slaves at a considerably lower price.

Fourth, the costs of maintaining and replacing slave labour. For the maintenance and reproduction of their labour power, the slaves were handed food on a daily basis. On top of this came regular expenditure on clothing and shelter. Generally, this only just went beyond the absolute minimum necessary. Slave-owners also had to pay the additional costs incurred by diseases, pregnancies and those associated with the elderly, who were no longer able to work. In this

respect, employing free wage workers offered benefits: sick or deceased wage earners could easily be replaced by newly hired workers, while for slave owners such cases would require new capital investment.

The economic aspects of slave ownership were also reflected in the prevailing macro-economic and cultural conditions, and this often led to mixed situations that caused the slave-owning classes significant difficulties. The more qualified they were, the more difficult it became to replace escaped slaves, who also often posed a threat to the white plantation families. Labour disputes quickly led to violent clashes, and in addition the authorities or humanitarian organisations meddled 'from the outside'. Moreover, there were problems of stability that questioned the slave-holding variant of capitalist development in the long term. The problems of the slave economy adapting to technological innovation – which have been overestimated in research on slavery – were not so paramount here: these problems could be dealt with for at least two centuries. Rather, the problem of the reproduction of the enslaved sections of the population was of far greater significance. Factors of social mobility, demographic change and forced migration played a crucial role in this. If, for example, the import of slaves subsided as a result of the increasing depopulation of the African catchment areas or as a result of the restriction of the transcontinental slave trade, then this had to be compensated for by the native slave population having more children. Yet this was only possible if their chances of survival were significantly improved. But this in turn led to growing efforts by the slaves to buy their freedom, which could not be permanently offset. Although the slaveholding planter oligarchies made significant efforts to consolidate their regime of exploitation, they found no ready recipe to curb the slaves' attempts to buy their freedom. The pervasive changes to social norms also played a role here. Ultimately, without the forced immigration of a sufficient number of new slaves, the slave economy could not be upheld. Although in the United States the slave economy was brought to an abrupt end through the Civil War of 1861 to 1865, its downfall would have been sealed even without this event.

These were remarkable insights which were deepened through comparative aspects, such as a comparison of slavery in the United States and Brazil.⁶⁰ But van der Linden was still not happy with the structures of the social sciences in approaching the problem. A few years ago another way of approaching the topic presented itself to him. This time it was not oriented towards the socio-economic issues of slavery, but based itself on the attempts to regulate it.

60 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 77 f.

The occasion for this was a IISH Colloquium on the long-term consequences of the suppression of the transatlantic slave trade which had been put into operation by Great Britain in 1807.⁶¹ He contributed a fascinating introductory piece to the volume of conference proceedings, which was edited three years later.⁶² In this he by no means merely outlined the prehistory, genesis and implementation of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, passed in 1807, which for him represented the first intervention to internationally regulate working conditions in history. Rather, he took the opportunity to bring out the 1807 act's historical context and, in particular, its completely unexpected and extremely contradictory consequences. This was quite surprising, because the agitation of the abolitionists – for van der Linden, the ‘first modern social movement’ – was very cautious and consisted of a step-by-step approach to realising their final goal, the abolition of slavery, without substantial political and economic convulsions.

But then things turned out quite differently. Precisely because by the turn of the century it succeeded in gradually involving the other European powers and the two American powers, but also the Ottoman Empire, Persia and the Arab sheikdoms into the agreement, the law had completely unexpected, and in part paradoxical, consequences. In both the North and the South of America, the slave populations' conditions of survival and reproduction improved, and the continental slave trade expanded considerably. In many parts of Africa too, the export barriers that were increasingly taking hold led to a significant expansion of slave labour, especially in the rapidly growing, labour-intensive plantation sector, and the continental slave trade intensified here too. In addition the trade routes that had run parallel to the Atlantic – across the Sahara, across the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea – experienced a new lease of life. The ultimate goal of the abolitionists thus seemed to retreat into the far distance. They were also highly aware of these unexpected counter-tendencies, but not the full extent of their impact. To counteract this, at the beginning of the 1840s they initiated a new campaign that this time focused on Africa itself, the country of origin of the slavery consignments. The first outposts of their campaign were the Christian missions. These were complemented by the compensatory expansion of ‘legitimate’ trade operations – raw materials for agriculture and industry – which grew rapidly as a result of the hunger for raw materials in industrialising Europe. Nevertheless, not all the potentates of the African empires could be convinced of the Europeans' humanitarian concerns. Now

61 van der Linden (ed.) 2011.

62 Ibid., pp. 1–45.

direct coercion followed, a military expedition justified by humanitarian and 'civilising' concerns. Thus the fight against the slave trade led to the colonial subjugation of Africa, legitimised by human rights concerns.

Nonetheless, the final goal of the abolitionists remained unchanged – the universal abolition of slave labour. Since humanitarian pressures in no way abated, the slaveholders and the authorities that largely covered for them had to search for ways of saving their regime of exploitation and accumulation – a regime that was by no means limited to the plantation economy – from lasting damage. In many regions of the world, the compensatory introduction of free wage labour was structurally impossible and in many economic and political constellations it was not sustainable for cost reasons. Replacements had to be found, which would transfer those who had to be dismissed from slavery to less scandalous unfree labour relations and prevent them from migrating to the agricultural subsistence sector, where they preferred to work. Using the research literature available today, van der Linden systematically listed the paths that were taken in doing so.⁶³ In general, the slaves first had to complete an apprenticeship lasting several years, in which they had to work for their former masters, free of charge, for an average of 45 hours per week. Following this, in the French colonies the taxes imposed on the slaves were so high that they had to accept the paid indentured labour offered to them by the colonial employers. In the Southern American states and some British colonies the slaves were prevented from migrating by imposing on them, with no other alternative, an organised form of sharecropping. Often the move away from slave-labour relations was carried out in form only. The freed men were forced to sign pseudo-contracts that made them the subjects of their former masters for 15 years, or even for life. While these methods were mainly applied in the French, Belgian and Portuguese colonies, the employers in the Southern American states, British India and Dutch (East) India preferred the system of debt bondage: in this the freed men received an advance on their future income as sharecroppers and so remained tied to their former place of work. Although they were no longer the property of the contractor, they were nonetheless subjected to him in his capacity as a creditor, meaning that their status did not actually change. Third, indentured labour was hugely significant because it replaced the slave trade that had gradually been drying up since the 1830s and advanced, little by little, to become the dominant form of replacement for involuntary labour migration. The regions of origin of so-called coolie labour were above all India and China, and the coolie work-

63 Ibid., pp. 28 ff.

ers were the first to oust slave labour in the Caribbean, later to be followed by the French colonies, South and West Africa and South East Asia. In the period between 1830 and 1925 around 36 million South Asian and Chinese labourers were shipped to the colonial South to work as forced labour. Beyond this, a fourth unfree labour relation asserted itself, the labour-tax system: in this case the free men had to provide the planter with a certain amount of their labour time for free, or to till a portion of their land for him. This was mainly carried out in the Dutch East Indies. It was complemented by a fifth form, that of convict labour. Convict labour had been customary for centuries, but following the abolition of slavery it experienced a new lease of life. Parallel to the labour performed by groups of prisoners known as county chain gangs, it became increasingly common to hire prisoners out to employers.

All in all the abolition of the transatlantic slave had far-reaching and paradoxical consequences that the abolitionists had in no way intended. The abolition of slavery led to the European powers entering into a second race to conquer and subjugate the global South. The consequence of the abolition of slavery was the emergence of a new archipelago of unfree labour relations, which largely replaced slave labour – even if only in form. According to van der Linden's assessment, in many regions of the world to this day forced labour remained cheaper and easier to discipline than 'free' wage labour, but slavery itself has by no means disappeared either. It would have been beyond the scope of his introductory piece for van der Linden to also have gone into more detail on the recovery of slave and forced labour in the Soviet Union and in the Fascist Axis powers – especially in German-dominated Europe and the Japanese-occupied 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'. Owing to the state of research that has now been attained on these problem areas, a further expansion of the discourse suggests itself, especially as it is becoming an even more explosive topic due to the recent expansion of prison labour in the United States (prison business) and in China and Russia too.

Linking Subsistence Labour

There was also a need for clarification in other problem areas of labour history. Chief among these was the problem of subsistence labour, namely where goods and services are produced that do not make it to market but are consumed by their own producer groups. Generally this sphere of production is not accorded any special significance, because most social scientists, economists and anthropologists equate it with extreme poverty. For them, societies can only escape such extreme poverty if they overcome subsistence economy and proceed to more advanced forms of natural economy. As a con-

sequence it is held that there is no alternative to this trend, and moreover this assessment is bound up with the hypothesis that a subsistence economy and a capitalist market economy are mutually exclusive in a kind of zero-sum game.

Yet this canon of modernisation theory remained unchallenged, and van der Linden discussed the counter-arguments to it in an insightful overview.⁶⁴ The Soviet agronomist Alexander Čaianov had already attested to the amazing staying power of the peasant 'natural economy'. Decades later French ethnologists came to realise that the advancing capitalist system did not destroy subsistence economies but rather incorporated them and used them to reduce social reproduction costs. Above all it was the agricultural subsistence communities that survived and took over the functions of a social security system in the developing countries, so that capitalism did not need to introduce such a system there. The two modes of production thus related to each other, but remained stand-alone economic systems.

It was precisely this point of view that was queried by a group of West German social scientists that came together in the course of the 1970s and later went down in the history of science as the 'Bielefeld School'. Their fieldwork revealed that the members of a typical subsistence family always produced for their own use, but in parallel with this also supplied commodity markets or hired themselves out as wage labourers. In their view there were thus different forms of production within one and the same – the capitalist – mode of production. Yet this finding was not only of significance for the states in the capitalist periphery. It overlapped with the analyses of the new metropolitan women's movement, which at that time was investigating the issue of domestic reproductive labour, its invisibility and its 'lack of value', by tracing it back to the fact that it was unpaid subsistence labour under patriarchal control. Subsistence labour was thus ubiquitous. It had to be regarded as an integral part of any social production and consequently as an indispensable basic condition for the expansion and preservation of capitalist commodity production as well. If these assumptions were true, then this would have far-reaching consequences for the conceptualisation of labour history. Firstly, it could then be assumed that the working poor always combined different survival strategies – and, consequently, modes of production too. Second, a certain amount of subsistence labour is always part of this strategic mix, and thirdly every individual from the working poor can pursue several survival strategies at the same time. Perspectives that look beyond the system could also be gained from the omnipresence

64 van der Linden 2008, Chapter 14, pp. 319–37.

of subsistence labour: if subsistence reproduction could be expanded at the expense of the market economy then the development of a strategic concept that sets basic human needs against the logic of capital accumulation became conceivable.

It was therefore obvious that van der Linden would deal with the Bielefeld School's conceptualisations and findings more thoroughly. He first examined the Bielefeld School's approach to definitions. In so doing he identified, and discussed, four variants of subsistence labour, some of which included small commodity production. For him it seemed that the best concept was the one proposed by the social scientist, Maria Mies, which on the one hand ruled out commodity production, but on the other took into consideration all the components of the reproduction of labour power and defined subsistence labour as the 'production of life in the broadest sense', namely as the day-to-day production of use-values and the creation of new life.⁶⁵ Proceeding on this basis, he then outlined the links between subsistence labour and small commodity production, as well as those between subsistence and wage labour, which had been brought to light by fieldwork in anthropology and the social sciences. In this the respective proportion of labour made up by subsistence labour was dependent on access to the resources required to perform such labour – arable land, seeds, livestock, tools and so on. Since, to a significant extent, male and female subsistence workers had to buy these things, their wage incomes from the formal/informal labour markets often coincided with the amount they sold on the commodity markets. The result of this was that it was precisely those households who were disproportionately reliant on the components of subsistence to survive that were confronted with particularly serious obstacles when trying to procure resources. This was the trap of mass poverty: only those who at least had a minimal cash income were able to engage in the subsistence economy as a fundamental principle of survival. The consequences were obvious and were further substantiated by evidence of the gender-specific division of labour between predominantly female subsistence labour and predominantly male-dominated wage labour and small commodity production: subsistence labour must be saved from capitalist penetration. And since capitalism without subsistence labour is not viable, this is the key point of departure in overcoming it.

What conclusions could be drawn from this approach, which was by no means always consistently developed, but convincing overall? Since he was referring primarily to free labour relations, van der Linden deemed it necessary

65 Ibid., p. 325.

to extend the scope of subsistence discourse to the multi-layered spectrum of unfree labour. Moreover, for him it seemed useful to distinguish between the transition from subsistence to commodified labour and the commodification of subsistence labour as such. In the first case this involved constellations in which subsistence families increasingly became dependent on wage labour and small commodity production, something that, however, can certainly be reversed – especially in times of economic crisis. In the other case, the three main components of subsistence labour – the object of labour, the means of labour and labour power itself – are to varying degrees transformed into commodities, from which, in turn, a variety of possible combinations arise. Yet since subsistence labour by no means completely disappears in this case either, introducing subsistence labour into the analysis of the capitalist relations of production led to several paradoxical results. Firstly, wage workers and small commodity producers, who to a significant extent are able to survive as subsistence producers, have a flexible relationship to the markets: if, for example, they need money, then they can undercut the market's wage and commodity rates. Second, their low cost of living put them in a position to considerably slow down the process of their proletarianisation, which would otherwise proceed much more quickly. Third, the subsistence sector often continued to exist even when it was no longer able to compete with commodity production. Fourth, and finally, male and female workers who have a sufficient subsistence basis at their disposal are considerably more capable of resistance than those who only have their 'golden chains' of wage labour to lose. In light of these findings, the approach of modernisation theory, according to which only the transition to commodity production can lead out of extreme poverty, is not very convincing. The opposite is the case: there is always a relapse into extreme poverty when the subsistence sector has disappeared or been destroyed.

The Significance of the Working-Class Households

In his analysis of the mutual benefit societies and subsistence networks, van der Linden continually came across a topic that previous labour historiography had dealt with in a rather neglectful manner: the working-class household. At first glance, the working-class household is a rather banal and slightly boring economic structure. It is a jointly administered budget, to which the members of a household contribute with their income that has its origins in a variety of sources; parallel to this they draw jointly agreed expenditures from it in order to survive and to improve their conditions of existence. Yet this apparently simple construction is extremely complex and difficult to grasp. It is therefore easy to see that in the issues associated with the phenomenon of the

'working-class household', van der Linden's efforts at expanding our views of labour history in an empirical and methodical fashion are influential to this day.⁶⁶

In his first conceptual approach van der Linden distinguished the working-class household from everything that it is not. First, it is not necessarily identical with a family that has existed for generations, but may also comprise several families as well as other relatives and non-relatives. Second, people can belong to this household who do not permanently live together with the others, but – like migrants, for example – can be very important to the household budget. Third, taking a look at its predominantly socio-economic functions should not tempt us into overlooking the cultural and symbolic processes associated with the working-class household because its functioning and composition are not predetermined, but the result of constant negotiations between the individual household members. These negotiations may well be of a conflictual nature: on the one hand children, who are particularly dependent on the stability of the household, have little influence over the household; on the other hand, patriarchal and restrictive cultural norms can lead to considerable conflicts, dependencies and disadvantages. These differentiations alone underline the importance of the working-class household for labour history: they refer to the hidden 'private' motives that prompt male or female workers to join workers' organisations with a public presence – or even to stay away from them too. They place centre stage the daily life of all members of the working class – men and women, young and old. And they make it possible to consider all forms of paid and unpaid work from a unified perspective.

Taking a look at the motives underlying the decision-making processes in working-class households illustrates their key role in labour history. The most important motive is the pursuit of social security, because people are even less able to put up with a process of impoverishment, the extent and duration of which cannot be estimated, than they are with poverty itself. In order to improve the size and stability of their budget, the members of the working-class household therefore look for the best possible employment contracts and remuneration. Beyond this they diversify their income sources as a way of reducing risk, and as a rule they therefore draw differing amounts of their income from self-employment and subsistence production. If, for example, public systems of social security are dismantled, then working-class house-

66 Van der Linden 1993, pp. 163–73; van der Linden 1994, pp. 129–44; van der Linden 1994a, pp. 109–21; Cf. Marcel's introduction to Kok (ed.) 2002, pp. 1–23, as well as van der Linden's concluding chapter (Ibid., pp. 230–42).

holds strengthen their traditional connections with the rural village communities. In order to protect themselves from the consequences of unemployment, lost strike struggles and price increases in the long term, household members often turn down well-paid jobs that rule out parallel activities in the subsistence sector and/or self-employed labour tasks.

A second fundamental motive is the desire for respectability and dignity. Working-class household members know exactly how to decide between the universal exchangeability of goods of a certain price and their inalienable human dignity: in principle this is considered as beyond commodification, even if prioritising a basic security of livelihood can lead to degrading work being taken up over and over again.

A third basic motive is the need for justice and equality, which plays a role in the negotiations around the household budget. It creates the preconditions to develop the reciprocal social relationships that link working-class households with one another and to include them into small communities superordinate to the working-class household – workers' quarters, mutual benefit societies, cooperatives and so on.

According to van der Linden, these three basic motifs represent social constructs that individual household members can interpret in very different ways depending on the specific economic and cultural context. Moreover, they are closely intertwined, because social security is a precondition of respectability and, in turn, dignity cannot be acquired and upheld if there is a lack of social justice.

Starting from these basic needs, working-class households determine their takings and outgoings in a process of continuous negotiation. Their incomes stem from at least seven possible sources, which can be most heterogeneous: from the remuneration of labour (in money or in kind); from domestic or extra-domestic subsistence labour; from independent labour in small commodity production and petty trade; from renting out the household's land, tools or beds and single rooms; from the social transfer payments of friends or public institutions; from theft (especially of work pieces or work tools); and not least from loans, the delayed repayment of debts, the pawn shop and so on. In proletarian households, remuneration from dependent labour is without doubt the dominant source of income. Yet a representative worker household can always fall back on several types of income. In addition, in the course of their lives all household members generate the most varied kinds of income, and in turn this is heavily dependent on the age and gender of the respective income earner.

By comparison, outgoings are less variegated. Members of the household must be supported during employment and in times of unemployment or

incapacity. On top of this comes support for the elderly, who are no longer capable of work, and for the children, who are not yet old enough to work. In addition, regular payments must be paid to third parties in the form of taxes, fees and debt interest.

In general, working-class households have great difficulty in arranging their income and expenditure so that they are able to meet the basic needs of their members. At the same time, during crises, natural catastrophes or possible personal impairments, they are always exposed to the risk of having to make painful cuts in order to ensure the survival of their members. It is therefore understandable that they attempt, with all the available means at their disposal, to avoid the then inevitable consequences – the cancellation of debt servicing, the restriction of food consumption to the point of chronic hunger, the removal from the household of those who are unfit to work, and so on. Lower-class households therefore develop a variety of strategies to stabilise and expand the budget available to them. First of all, individual households may give up their residence and move into the neighbourhood and to another city, or emigrate to another country or another continent first; but they can also equip their best-suited members with the resources required for labour migration and place their hopes on their monthly transfers (remittances). Second, in the long term they can deposit savings in order to make provisions for times of crisis, or even purchase a piece of land or a house. Another possibility is, third, to improve the remuneration of labour by changing jobs, taking on further jobs and/or by expanding subsistence labour.

This is the extent of the options available to individual households. In most cases, however, they will fall back on the diverse external possibilities of improving their living conditions long before this. For first-generation immigrants, for example, the assistance provided by relatives is often a crucial prerequisite for survival, whereas the working-class households in industrial agglomerations can reactivate relationships with their rural regions of origin. In addition there are the personal networks in the small communities – neighbourhoods, urban quarters or rural communities, but also the forms of fictive relations that are widespread in the working class (godparents, adoptions and so on), which in turn produce a variety of links with the actual relationships of kin. These class-internal (horizontally structured) networks confront cross-class (vertically structured) networks of patronage: working-class households submit to the patronage of landlords, notables, businessmen and politicians, who provide them with social protection and expect appropriate attestations of loyalty in return. Finally, a less risky and more manageable option that is more adequate to the needs of respectability and justice is the self-organisation of working-class households in the form of mutual benefit societies and con-

sumer cooperatives which, as van der Linden stressed over and over again, can in turn be closely linked to trade unions and workers' parties.

All of these options are tied to specific historical constellations within which the working-class households exist. The households will never be able to fall back on the entire spectrum of survival options van der Linden listed above. On the other hand, several survival strategies are always tested at the same time, and since they are closely linked to each other, from time to time they will strengthen, or even weaken, each other.

In turn, several paradoxical conclusions arise from this wealth of options which, as van der Linden stresses, modify the common image of labour history quite considerably. Given the almost inexhaustible possibilities of action on the part of working-class households, it seems by no means logical and compelling that male or female workers would support the workers' movement, for according to van der Linden this is merely one of several survival strategies. This notwithstanding, the existence of working-class households helped at least a section of the working class to organise themselves independently as workers and to put up resistance to their exploitation; in this, however, other factors such as labour markets, ethnic and religious barriers and so on ought to be taken into consideration. Yet in any case the working-class household, as an elementary basis of worker activism, should be incorporated into our conceptualisation of labour history. Through their links with the mutual benefit societies and consumer cooperatives, working-class households constitute a sphere of self-organised material survival, which develops beyond the levels of confrontation with the employers and the state. In contrast, producer cooperatives are an integral part of the level of worker activism that is conflict-oriented and fixed on the sphere of the employer, and at the level of state conflict there is a struggle for everything that cannot be achieved in the spheres of self-organisation and disputes with the employer.

An Interim Balance

Since the early 1990s, Marcel van der Linden has explored numerous problem areas of labour history – I have attempted to outline the eight most important of these. He set off on these explorations at a time when many were bidding farewell to the history of the working classes or were reducing it to a few facets that were agreeable to the mainstream. Undoubtedly, many who did so provided several important new insights that could enrich a conceptually integrative labour history. In so far as new insights were achieved, van der Linden certainly took them with him into his workshop, such as in the case of the insights of new cultural history, which stated that material interests are always symbolically constituted: only symbolic processes are capable of provid-

ing us with the meanings we need to classify our social environment.⁶⁷ He certainly paid tribute to the new triad of ethnicity, gender and race as well,⁶⁸ something that was not difficult for him following his independent investigation of the influence of racism on the working class. Yet he did not give up on his view of the integrated whole and resisted the academy's compartmentalisation of the angular and occasionally offensive phenomena that accompanied proletarian survival strategies. For van der Linden it was a question of the whole, a question that needed to be pursued by means of the new perspectives gained: who are the workers? How are their labour relations obtained? How are they being exploited, and what does exploitation mean anyway? Ultimately, answering these questions, which are simple and yet so 'grand', revolved around the attempt to understand the emergence and spread of the capitalist social formation from the perspective of those below. All the previously achieved expansions of our knowledge could find their place under this roof.

Such a roof structure requires a solid static and depends on firm foundations and stable pillars. Its elements could not simply be cobbled together from what had previously been worked out. New overarching conceptualisations were needed. Firstly, labour history had to be embedded in a spatial and temporal framework that linked it with the history of the capitalist world system. In addition came the foundation and the cornerstone, the anchoring of labour history in the concept of labour. There had always been initial attempts at doing this by developing previous levels of analysis. But now they had to be systematised. Interdisciplinary and comparatively consolidated labour history⁶⁹ expanded to become global labour history. So as to be able to hold it together in this broad process of expansion, the inner beams of global labour history had to be re-examined and re-conceptualised along with the political economy of the world system.

VI Learning from the Periphery: The Road to Global Labour History

India as a Lesson

In the course of 1991 Marcel van der Linden got to know the Indian historians Ranajit Das Gupta, Rana P. Behal and Prabhu P. Mohapatra through the Dutch

67 Van der Linden 2003a, pp. 70–84, here p. 75; in addition, Griffin and van der Linden (eds.) 1998.

68 Cf., for example, van Voss and van der Linden (eds.) 2002.

69 Van der Linden always scrutinised the comparative components of his approach too. The most thought-out systematisation can be found in van der Linden 2003a, pp. 173–86.

social scientist, Jan Breman. Together they carried out research on the history of labour relations on the tea plantations in the Assam Valley and in West Bengal, but also on the Indian coolie worker diaspora in the Caribbean. In addition there were Breman's studies, which focussed on the labour relations today. Breman had been investigating the movement of the working poor from the rural areas to the city (rural-urban circulation) in Southern Gujarat since the 1960s. Friendships soon developed from this scientific dialogue and gradually van der Linden's circle of Indian communication partners expanded. A new world was opening up for him. Until then his efforts to broaden the horizons of labour history had occurred within the environment of a circle of European and Northern American colleagues. He could now leave the transatlantic perspective behind him at a time when the decline of the metropolitan labour movement had also thrown labour historiography into a crisis. By contrast, things had looked different in what for a long time had been considered to be the periphery and semi-periphery. A lasting process of industrialisation had been underway in the global South since the 1980s. It overhauled labour relations, led to enormous social conflicts and promoted the rise of a new and independent type of labour historiography. Van der Linden realised the opportunities that resulted from this. Since he himself was in search of new horizons, he was able to use the new contexts of discussion to review what had hitherto been attained. What would be retained when moving forward? Where were corrections necessary? To what extent did important analytical premises have to be abandoned? His processes of learning with regard to Indian labour history, which were then expanded to encompass the other continents of the periphery, can be logically traced with reference to several compilations that van der Linden has published since the 1990s in cooperation with his new Indian dialogue partners – including a commemorative volume in honour of Jan Breman.⁷⁰

In the first instance, van der Linden considered himself vindicated in several of the steps forward that he had already taken. For example, all studies revealed the prominent role of the working-class household. As of today the working-class household is the elementary unit that guarantees the survival of the working poor. Were it not for this household then the working poor would not be in a position to cope with the conditions of their existence, which certainly are not only extreme in times of crisis or catastrophe. The household keeps most layers of the lower classes going. People who fall out of it for whatever

70 On this, and on what follows, cf. the introductions (which he partly put together with the co-editors) and the individual contributions, for which he alone is responsible, in Amin and van der Linden (eds.) 1996; Das and van der Linden (eds.) 2003; Behal and van der Linden (eds.) 2007; Mohapatra and van der Linden (eds.) 2009.

reason quickly lose their remaining social ties and end up in the criminal milieu of the urban lumpenproletariat.

In other problem areas, new emphases turned out to be inevitable. Among these was the ideal type of the free wage labourer. He certainly had considerable reservations about the dominant role of the male, unionised industrial worker employed in a permanent position before he came to deal with Indian labour history. In India, however, such workers, along with public sector employees, were merely a tiny minority of the working class, an elite that was internally fragmented but that outwardly distanced itself from the phenomenon of the working poor. It would only become active when its own privileges were under threat. There were of course dynamic cross-overs between this and other strata of the working classes, and it therefore seemed inappropriate to draw a rigid line of demarcation between them. Yet precisely this threat of social relegation, a threat that could never be ruled out, formed a psychological barrier that precluded political and organisational alliance structures between them. However, what was largely new was the perception of the diverse segmentations that characterised the broad masses of the lower classes, in spite of the diverse individual and collective cross-overs between them. Below the industrial worker elite there was a much wider group of self-employed workers who eke out their existence as craftsmen, small traders, sharecroppers and go-betweens for jobs. They could equally be found in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, and there were dynamic cross-overs between them and individuals and small collectives who lived in absolute poverty as waste collectors and rag-and-bone men. The segment of self-employed workers was followed by the even broader layer of the sub-proletariat. This segment, composed of seasonal workers, day labourers and casual workers moved between the most diverse rural and urban employment opportunities. Breman deemed them 'wage hunters and gatherers'. Finally the lowest layer was formed by the uprooted urban lumpenproletariat that, in as much as it did not beg, survived mainly with the help of criminal practices.

Still other certainties had to be qualified in light of both the historical and contemporary fieldwork in India. Among these were: first, the pervasive interlocking of the structures of the subsistence economy with the closely interwoven formal and informal sectors of the economy; secondly the dynamic relationship between rural and urban labour relations, which queried the dichotomy that was often claimed to exist in labour historiography; and thirdly the integration of processes of migration into the regional areas of investigation: wherever the subsistence economy had been marginalised and broad layers of landless male and female workers existed, the vast majority of the working poor was constantly on the move. In turn, these circulation processes between the

country and the city led to vast differences between free and unfree, independent and dependent, paid and paid-in-kind labour relations. This occasionally went so far that the conceptual dichotomies of the participating observers dissolved into continua and 'circulating' phenomena.

Another learning process resulted from noting the long duration of labour relations. In India pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial labour relations persist to this day. So the circulation of landless small peasants that is so dominant today had already existed in the pre-colonial period. Their conditions of labour and what they needed to live certainly changed over the course of the centuries, like towards the end of British colonial rule, when unfree patronage relations were abolished. Yet following the decolonisation of many plantation companies – such as the Indian Tea Association – these were replaced by new forms of unfreedom: for example, the landless wandering into the Assam Valley were bound to their new places of work and cut off from the outside world so as to prevent them from organising themselves collectively. In addition it could generally be observed that labour relations went through particular upturns and downturns over the centuries. So it was that on occasion sharecropping or debt bondage almost completely disappeared, only to rapidly expand again in certain periods.

Yet the way that labour relations had been classified by that point also had to be revised. Until then, van der Linden had marked them on an axis formed by the poles of unfree labour (with slavery as an extreme form) and free wage labour. In order to stay abreast of the results of the fieldwork conducted by his Indian colleagues and Breman, studies that partly continued down to the present, he now conceptualised a triangle, on the basis of which the dynamic cross-overs between unfree labour, self-employment and free wage labour could be recorded. In addition, it struck him as sensible to distinguish between fully or partially self-determined (autonomous) labour relations – subsistence labour and self-employment – and the heteronomous manifestations of the realisation of labour capacity: between unfree labour and free wage labour.

Further food for thought came both from Jan Breman and the Indian colleagues: in the process of its expansion, labour historiography should not only take into consideration the constellations of peripheral capitalism, but also must carry out a fundamental review of its location. As long as labour historiography unquestioningly transferred the structural models developed in, and handed down by, the world system's major metropolises, then even in its anti-systemic varieties it remained trapped in the doctrines of modernisation theory, according to which the West dictates to the rest of the world how things are done. In other words it remains – often unintentionally – an appendage

of the common doctrines of development politics, whose exponents apply the old colonial 'civilising' models as non-differentiated tools, be that in Peru, Bangladesh, Egypt or Nigeria. Jan Breman urgently advised that it depart from all variants of this 'Occidentalism'.

Revisions in a Global Context

Of course, no claim to generalisation could be deduced from the reception of labour relations in India either in the present or historically. This could only be possible if the conditions that constituted the working poor in the other continents and subcontinents commonly attributed to the Global South were investigated and compared. Yet what was also required was a critical integration of the past and present of the working classes in the Triad Region itself – North America (USA/Canada), Japan and Europe. For a truly comprehensive approach was only conclusive if the question of whether the traditional methods of labour historiography in the major cities did justice to their objects of inquiry or whether they, to a lesser or greater extent, passed historical and contemporary reality by.

The opportunity for such a comprehensive review arose in 2000, when the IISH celebrated its 65th anniversary with a conference on global labour history. Whoever takes a look at the conference proceedings, which were published six years later, and compares them with the proceedings from 1985 and 1987 will immediately recognise what leaps forward the research department of the Amsterdam Institute had taken in developing its ideas.⁷¹ It was no longer the metropolitan/metropolitan-influenced institutions of the workers' movement that were at the centre of the historical reports and reflections, but the working class of the continents and subcontinents as a whole. This crossed borders in a dual sense: in territorial (nation state) perspectives and socio-structural perspectives as well. It was complemented by global case studies on selected segments of the working class. Although these studies did not omit the traditional focus of labour historiography – miners, dockers, railway workers – they were, however, supplemented by in part diachronically applied perspectives on the global history of agricultural work, domestic labour and brick work. It was an impressive inventory of historical knowledge that encompassed all continents and regions of the world system and was underpinned by excellent case studies. In this context the programmatic considerations presented by Marcel van der Linden were of particular significance.⁷²

⁷¹ Lucassen (ed.) 2006.

⁷² Van der Linden 2006, pp. 13–36.

First of all, it became clear that the ideal type of the 'doubly free wage worker', which had its origins in classical political economy and was then canonised by such contrary thinkers as Karl Marx, Max Weber and Götz Briefs, had lost its guiding function. Even in the metropolises its axiomatic fixation ensured that it rather represented more of a fiction: even in the times of the two metropolitan industrial upheavals, a nomad completely rid of his means of production and subsistence who temporarily sold his labour power to an industrial capitalist and eked out his existence with the cash payments he received in exchange for this was an exceptional phenomenon. Above all, it functioned as a model to justify the existence of a male-patriarchal dominated white worker elite that defended its segment-specific interests in the form of hierarchically-structured organisations. Moreover, since the mid-1970s this model had been in a process of accelerated decline: the industrialisation programmes of the nation states in the Global South were replaced by structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), the Soviet bloc imploded and, with the active participation of the labour bureaucracies, the welfare state's spell of fine weather in the metropolises made way for concepts of strategic underemployment, which dispersed the lower classes dependent on employment towards countless different labour relations and surrendered them to the uncertainties and risks of the low-wage sectors. Across the world – even in the big cities – labour relations are defined by a lower class that is largely black, female and socially unprotected.

It was therefore high time for labour historiography to bid farewell to the symbols, meaning and courses of action linked to the 'doubly free wage labourer'. Spatially, everything that labour historiography had previously faded out in its basic binary orientation had to be re-integrated into the analysis: the working class of the Global South, the households and communities split off from their workplaces, the workshops neglected in favour of the factories and the rural regions that had been forgotten by focusing on the urban centres. In parallel with this, the time axis of labour history had to be freed from its splitting up into early, high and late capitalist stages and from the way in which these were conceived as guided by evolution along a one-way street. Only in this way was it possible to analyse the simultaneity of the opposing processes of industrialisation and de-industrialisation resulting from the unequal development of the world system. In turn, these processes explained the persistence and co-existence of 'pre-modern', 'modern' and 'post-modern' labour relations, sharpening our view of both the converging and opposing tendencies towards constituting the global working class. Finally, a globally expanding labour historiography would only do justice to the complexity of its object of inquiry if it also rethought the formal connections between workers (both male and

female) and employers and brought to the fore the complex universe of free, independent and unfree labour relations.

This was a wide range of topics to globalise our perception of labour history. It was natural to also test it in those areas which were not part of their immediate field of study. Chief among these was the history of labour management, the control of living labour based on organisation and technology. This field of industrial relations was also characterised by strongly 'occidental' premises, and as a consequence all 'progress' in the discipline of male/female workers and the increase in their productivity was derived from the metropolitan factory system. On this terrain too, van der Linden worked out an important counter-argument to this approach by accounting for the early origins of 'modern' organisational procedures and showing how they interacted with each other.⁷³ For example, the system of group manufacture, with work cycles and minutely prescribed individual movements, is commonly attributed to an American time-and-motion engineer from the early twentieth century. Yet in fact it was already developed at the beginning of the seventeenth century as a way of seamlessly monitoring slave workers deployed in gangs, who had to work the sugar cane fields of the Caribbean with a working rhythm that was prescribed down to the last detail. But the less costly procedure of monitoring a given output of labour, that of prescribing daily tasks and chores with detailed rules, also came about in the capitalist periphery, namely at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a governor recently sent to Australia reorganised the exploitation of prison labour so as to replace the inefficient and brutal system of discipline and punishment with a more sophisticated mix of negative and positive incentives. In both cases, van der Linden was able to demonstrate the spread of the new methods of exploitation to the entire colonial hemisphere and produce convincing evidence that these were eventually transferred to the industrialising core zones of the world system as well.

Differentiating Himself from 'Old' Labour History

While he was further developing this first overall draft, van der Linden simultaneously sought to distance himself from the previous fundamental assumptions of labour historiography in the most precise possible way: for the historiography of labour there is no dominant labour relation and no hegemonic working-class layer. All segments should be classified as equally important and referred to by their common basis of existence, the working-class household. In this 'egalitarian' context an unbiased approach to free wage labour was possible

73 Van der Linden 2010, pp. 509–22.

again: just like self-employment, sharecropping or unfree labour, in certain historical constellations it was of significant importance, in others it faded away into insignificance. Yet the precondition of this new found impartiality towards labour history remained determined by the view that free wage labour can never be canonised as a 'natural', 'typical' or 'normal' labour relation.⁷⁴ Premises of this sort obscure a view of the complex whole and – whether consciously or otherwise – abandon emancipatory concerns in favour of sectional interests.

For van der Linden, the second error of previous labour historiography was its axiomatic drawing of the nation state's territorial, political and cultural parameters. Here it was not so much power interests or ideological definitions that were paramount, for most male and female historians kept a certain distance from them. Rather, problematic for van der Linden was the deeply internalised structure of thought that he referred to – somewhat unfortunately – as 'methodological nationalism'.⁷⁵ By this he meant the virtually automated application of certain epistemological assumptions to labour history's fields of study that presupposed the nation state as an almost 'natural' framework which was nonetheless able to co-exist with anti-national political convictions. In contrast, van der Linden stressed the fact that nation states are very young historical phenomena. It was therefore inappropriate to reinterpret the epochs that preceded it as the pre-history of national statehood. Its perspectives for the future were also quite limited too, and therefore one could only warn against taking the dominant position it achieved in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to mean that it had achieved a steady state that could no longer be questioned. Equally fatal was the frequent equation of the nation state with the structures of society, because by doing so societies were misunderstood as rigid systems. Social life is so varied that identifying it with the structures of the nation state results in exclusion and a compulsion towards uniformity. Consequently, it was time to bid farewell to nation states, which had become hived off 'Leibnizian monads', and to overcome the spatial, cultural and psychological limitations of the concept of society inextricably linked to them.

Yet in van der Linden's assessment, the full effect of 'methodological nationalism' only becomes apparent in cooperation with Eurocentrism. This was a specific variant of the modernisation theory that had come to dominate 'old' labour historiography in Europe and the United States since the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ The adherents of this concept considered humanity to be an endless

74 Van der Linden 2003a, pp. 197–204.

75 Marcel van der Linden 2003c, pp. 10–40; van der Linden 2007e, pp. 31–44; van der Linden 2010a, pp. 353–83.

76 *Ibid.*; in addition: van der Linden 2003a, pp. 143–53.

procession headed by the group of nation-state monads in the transatlantic region.⁷⁷ As the representatives of economic, cultural and moral progress, they considered themselves to be authorised to set out the path of further development even to subcontinents like China and India, which culturally were so highly advanced. It is possible to distinguish between three schools of thought within this. The first option made it particularly simple for itself: it proceeds on the assumption that it is permissible to present the history of its own transatlantic field of study in ignorance and out of conscious disregard for the rest of the surrounding world. A second tendency, however, is guided by preconceptions. While its authors may take into consideration 'global lines of connection, they nevertheless think that Greater Europe (including North America and Australasia) "shows the way".⁷⁸ The hardest variant to deal with is the third one, which at the same time is the most influential. Its representatives proceeded on assumptions for which they considered there to be an empirical basis and as a consequence treated these assumptions as if they were scientific facts. This empirically-established Eurocentrism is particularly difficult to refute and it requires meticulous reasoning to do so. For example, since it was perceived that the success of many trade unions was rooted in their having concluded certain wage agreements, the labour historians took this to be an empirically-established fact that was universally valid and thus could be applied to the labour history of the other regions of the world as well. For van der Linden, this deep-seated automatism of Eurocentric thought could also be found among authors who flatly rejected Eurocentrism as a hegemonic concept of contempt or a component of a unilinear understanding of progress. Here labour historiography encountered deeply rooted figures of thought, the omnipotence of which was aptly described by the French social historian, Lucien Febvre: 'The intellectual category that we forged in the workshops of the intellect [*Geist*] is able to impose itself with the same force and tyranny – and it clings more unbendingly to life than the machines that are produced in our factories'.⁷⁹

Conceptualising a Global Labour History

Enough on van der Linden distancing himself from the basic assumptions of previous labour historiography. This came just in time to integrate the global

77 These metaphors stem from an essay by the social scientist, Robert Nisbet, which van der Linden extensively quoted in his discussion of Eurocentrism. Cf., van der Linden, 2003c, p. 17.

78 Ibid.

79 Cf. van der Linden 2003, p. 18.

history of male and female workers into global historiography, which had been rapidly developing since the beginning of the new millennium. But in a programmatic respect it was still in its infancy. What should the first steps look like, and what direction should be taken?

At the beginning a decision needed to be made on the conceptual framework.⁸⁰ Several methods were available here. It was possible to draw up a world history of labour that described the development of labour relations and the workers' organisations in accordance with universal history in as complete a fashion as possible. There were numerous narratives of this kind, but even the best were so general that their significance was limited. The procedure preferred by many historians of, as it were, pausing on the middle path and being content with a 'transnational' point of view, in which the 'national' ultimately persisted as a normative reference point of transnational analysis, was just as unattractive to Marcel van der Linden; in such a case the forms through which the national and the transnational had articulated themselves in the periods before the rise of the modern nation states remained unexplained. In light of such half-measures, global labour history seemed a silver bullet. It set itself the task of reconstructing the development of the capitalist world system from the perspective of the lower classes. In so doing it could draw on two complementary ways of proceeding. It could examine how labour relations gradually developed since the emergence of the capitalist world system in the fifteenth century and evolved down to the present. In parallel with this it was possible to portray the history of labour relations, workers' struggles and organisations by means of global comparisons. Moreover, insightful interfaces emerged by combining the vertical and horizontal approaches, which can in addition be condensed through comparative recourse to labour relations in pre-capitalist epochs. Continental, regional and local case studies could also be found in this wickerwork. Even a micro-historical study of a Peruvian mining village that has been in existence for centuries can enrich global labour history enormously if it proceeds from the history of its origins, presents in detail its interrelations with the continental and transcontinental migration of miners and compares its history with that of mining communities in other regions of the world.

Following this basic clarification there arose the question of what tools global labour history should deploy.⁸¹ Here there were many similarities with global history in general, but also some particularities. First its multi-disciplinary approach should be mentioned. This is not merely a matter of pooling

80 Van der Linden and Lucassen 1999, pp. 21 ff.; Van der Linden 2003c, pp. 10–40, here pp. 21 ff.

81 Van der Linden 2006, pp. 27 ff.; van der Linden 2002, pp. 4 ff.; van der Linden 2003c, pp. 29 ff.

together into a global history of labour such important historical sub-disciplines as the history of slavery, family households, women, gender and migration, the latter of which was increasingly concentrated on the Global South. Their diverse perspectives on the history of labour relations are undoubtedly of great importance. Yet these should be supplemented by the reception of the ethnological and ethnohistorical fieldwork, whose teams have been investigating the change in the living conditions of numerous minorities for centuries and have accompanied them from their fishing and farming villages into the neighbourhoods of the slum cities. Yet the critical sociology of labour and development also has important insights to offer, as we have already seen in the example of Jan Breman. In addition there are the traditions of industrial relations which, if read against the grain, occasionally provide revealing insights into everyday conflicts within the workplace. Once it presides over solid conceptual foundations, global labour historiography is able to develop an appeal that can radiate across the entire spectrum of the social and human sciences.

Of equally great significance is opening up the sources. Van der Linden made his views known on this for the first time at the IISH conference on global labour history, which was held in 2000.⁸² Here too he called for a substantial expansion of source material, because only in this way can one do justice to the enormous expansion of the spectrum of research. And since he was speaking as a representative of an institution that had long been a pioneer in precisely this field, he could refer to the new technological possibilities that aided and abetted international networks of global history: databases. If the written records, transcripts and audio recordings of oral history are professionally fed into databases and made available for full text and factual research (statistics and so on) then unprecedented new possibilities result for digital teamwork. For this, however, further requirements must be met: firstly, the white spots of global labour history must be disposed of through a comprehensive and thought out collection process in the regions of the world where the sources have been least tapped into and supplemented by written testimonies from colonial history. And secondly, the establishment of suitable archives to bring together, preserve and develop these materials is necessary so that they can be later added to the database. Yet this is what is lacking above all in the Global South, because precisely there the establishment of professional archives is made considerably more difficult not only for general cost reasons, but also because of the particular climatic and environmental conditions.

82 Van der Linden 2006, pp. 29 ff.; cf. also van der Linden 2003c, pp. 31 ff.

These tools are essential for the production of historical knowledge, but they will only be effective if used correctly. In the meantime the necessary framework for this was marked out as a proposal to work out a common field of action devoted to a transnational and transcontinental study of labour relations and workers' organisations, encompassing all forms of exploitation and household structures and to study them in the context of the world market that had been developing since the 14th century.⁸³ By means of a comparative analysis, four operative levels can be chosen and, where appropriate, combined. In the first place came the working out of differences and commonalities between two or more fields of inquiry. This comparative base analysis can secondly be supplemented by textual comparisons, through which the developed typologies or hypotheses are verified or falsified. A third possibility of verification is ensured by investigating interactions so as to reveal hidden influences on the contexts under discussion. If this step was also successful, then an integrating analysis can be attempted by combining the comparisons and the interaction studies with each other and translating them into a causal narrative which carves out the connections between the development of labour relations, struggles and organisations in different regions of the world.

Rarely has a new terrain of historical research been conceived in such a systematic and meticulous fashion as in the IISH's global labour history project. Yet its effects could only be felt if it led to the creation of an international network that appropriated the new concepts and developed them further. The response did not take long to arrive.⁸⁴ It was no coincidence that the first steps to establishing a new research association were taken by van der Linden's Indian colleagues: at the end of 1996 they founded the Association of Indian Labour Historians in New Delhi, and organised several successful annual conferences, including in Calcutta and Mumbai. In the late 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium, these were followed by the establishment of another association in Brazil, and conferences in Pakistan, South Korea and Indonesia for the first time. The IISH helped initiate this, and van der Linden increasingly made his name as a networker who continuously visited and advised the initiatives taken in the regions of the Global South and in the rising semi-periphery. In this way it has in the meantime been possible to free the transatlantic associations and institutions of labour history, which have been in existence since the 1970s, from their 'Great European' enclave and to globalise them. The future will show

83 Thus the official definition of the objectives of the new *global labour history* proposed by the IISH. Cf. van der Linden 2006, pp. 1f.

84 On the following, cf. van der Linden and Lucassen 1999; van der Linden 2006, pp. 13 ff.; van der Linden 2006, pp. 11 f.; Marcel van der Linden 2003c, pp. 21 ff.

whether the structures of cooperative work developed by transatlantic labour history will endure or whether they will be replaced by new models. The metropolitan networks had developed two successful models in the period between the 1970s and the 1990s: firstly a collective way of working that only turned out to be efficient if the members exhibited a high degree of conceptual agreement; and secondly, most of all the project model practiced by the IISH, with which we have already become acquainted by means of several examples.

The IISH's New Research Project

Nevertheless, enormous difficulties piled up in the transition to empirical research practice, difficulties that could not even be coped with even by using the well thought-out programmatic, manual and institutional guidelines. Van der Linden quickly perceived these difficulties and presented them for debate in his lectures and essays over and again.⁸⁵ Above all, an elementary problem stemmed from the fact that even key concepts of labour history can have very different meanings in different cultures and that even on closer inspection it can be difficult to translate the context of these concepts. The concept of labour was particularly affected by this, and more complex issues, such as how to define a trade union, mean very different things within their respective cultural and social connotations and even more so outside of them. These problems of understanding and translation should, according to van der Linden, be openly acknowledged, and efforts should be made to work out canons of compatibility that are able to overcome cultural barriers. In addition it struck him as advisable to pose plausibly defined questions so as to make it easier for research teams to begin their work and to incorporate findings from neighbouring disciplines. In recent years van der Linden has put forward a number of proposals to this effect. He pointed out that artisan guilds are longstanding transcontinental phenomena in labour history. He committed himself to a globally oriented study of collective actions, advised projects on a transcontinental history of miners, dockers and textile workers and recommended a detailed analysis of employment relationships in the early capitalist colonial companies, which had not only established plantation slavery but also exploited very heterogeneous layers of workers in the 'mother countries'. In addition there were further-reaching references to the long-distance, transcontinental effects on the cotton industry that local changes in labour relations could produce (something that Rosa Luxemburg had already noted), as well as to the fact that the establish-

85 Van der Linden 2003c, pp. 32 ff.; van der Linden 2006, pp. 8 ff.; van der Linden 2003c, pp. 39 ff.

ment of global production chains – something that was not only possible to observe in our day – always linked together the most diverse labour relations. For van der Linden, both cases involved typical ‘tele-connections’ that inspired him to systematise the resulting potential insights for global labour history.

Increasingly, these suggestions were met positively and accelerated the emergence of a community of labour historians communicating with each other across the globe. In the IISH itself the number of research projects increased significantly too. Since this development gradually threatened to exceed the institute’s capacity, in 2004 its evaluation and advisory bodies recommended that the research activities be pooled together.⁸⁶ These initiatives found fertile ground, and global labour history finally advanced to become the Amsterdam Institute’s central field of research. The conceptualisation of an overarching framework was a huge challenge, despite having the programmatic guidelines of 1999 and 2002 to fall back on. A project group was established, which, following long and repeated debates, agreed on a framework for the study of the global labour history from the emergence of capitalism through to the present (1500–2000). It covered eight main areas.

The first of these was to investigate labour relations in the base years of 1500, 1650, 1800, 1900 and 2000 in order to clarify which labour relations could be found in these times and how common they were.

A second area was to deal with the question of why certain forms of labour relations gain or lose significance in certain periods, why wage labour increasingly came to the fore and why in certain periods of great change there were particularly striking displacements. Comparisons with pre-capitalist conditions were to be drawn on in this research.

A third module was to be dedicated to an historical analysis of work incentives and to work out the relative weight of coercion, compensation and commitment, a triad that had occupied labour historiography for a long time. The relative weight of these incentives could vary greatly depending on the particular employment relationship, and the module had the task of outlining the various and divergent possible combinations.

In contrast, the staff working on the fourth key area had the task of developing a global history of the social mobility of the working classes. Such mobility

86 On this, and on what follows, cf. International Institute of Social History, Annual Report 2004, 2005, 2006–2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, Amsterdam 2005–2011; NN [Marcel van der Linden und Jan Lucassen], *Globalisierungsgeschichte “von unten”*. Weltweite Erkundung der Arbeitsverhältnisse, 1500–1650, s.a. (ca. 2005), Archiv der Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte (hereafter: SFS-Archiv), Forschungsprojekt “Multiversum”, from Marcel van der Linden’s manuscripts.

could occur within a generation, but also across generations, and at the same time the upward or downward mobility could occur within certain labour relations or in the move to other independent occupations. Of course, representative statements were only possible if they were based on a verified classification of professions that could be linked up with the respective labour relations that had been discovered. Here too, as in the other key areas, the IISH already presided over well-developed databases in the form of the Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations (HISCO).

The fifth research group was to dedicate itself to reconstructing the geographical mobility of the working poor. Whether in its forced or voluntary forms, labour migration had significantly contributed to the spread of the capitalist world system. Certain patterns of migration could be observed in the interplay between the 'sending' and 'receiving' regions. By no means did these patterns only play a significant role in the Atlantic region.

In addition to this, a sixth module was to investigate the geographical mobility of production systems. Not only does such mobility shape current global economic development; it has also accompanied the global expansion of capitalism from the outset. The transcontinental movements of production systems are always linked to certain models for the relocation of labour relations, something that was already shown by the relocation of sugar cane plantations from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean, and from there to South and South-East Asia.

The seventh area concerned the cultural and historical context of labour relations, namely the development of work ethics and systems of norms related to work. By taking into account socio-religious and gender-historical issues it could be explained why certain professions were ranked higher or lower than others, who was admitted into them and who was not, and which work activities were regarded as particularly degrading.

The eighth and final area was to take up anew an old question of labour history: the rise and fall of collective forms of organisation and action. In doing so the more or less permanent structures of self-organisation – fraternities, guilds, trade unions and so on – were not to be overlooked. Yet equal attention had to be devoted to the ad hoc constellations of worker resistance that were primarily organised by unfree labourers. Despite the wide-ranging organisational structures, certain forms of resistance – arson, strikes and sabotage – could 'be observed in labour relations of all kinds'.⁸⁷

87 NN [Van der Linden and Lucassen], *Globalisierungsgeschichte* (as in footnote 86), p. 3.

This was an impressive framework. It was also convincing because it opened up the possibility of combining the practice of internationally networked project work with the reorganisation and pooling together of the Institute's research projects. How this was planned in detail can be seen from a test-run moderated by van der Linden and Jan Lucassen, which set itself the task of exploring global labour relations in the period between 1500 and 1650 and thus grouped together the themes of the first area (the cross-section of labour relations in 1500 and 1650 respectively) and the seventh (work ethics).⁸⁸ As is generally known, in the 'long sixteenth century' (Immanuel Wallerstein) several cultures expanded at the same time: the European 'West' to America, Africa and Asia, the Ottoman Empire to the Middle East, North Africa and South East Asia, and the Indian Mughal Empire to South Asia. Parallel to this, long-distance transcontinental trade, which had been in existence for a long time, passed over into specific forms of the division of labour – and the tendencies towards the formation of a capitalist market economy were not only strengthened in the transatlantic regions either. But above all the 'long sixteenth century' was characterised by the clash of different forms of work ethics, which were accompanied by massive labour mobilisations and, despite tendencies towards inertia, brought about enormous shifts in the cultural evaluation of work – both hybrid forms and new structures. All of these culturally connoted phenomena that accompanied the socio-structural transformation were to be investigated in nine major regions: in Western Europe, Eastern Europe/Russia, the Ottoman Empire, the Indian Mughal Empire, South East Asia, East Asia (China, Japan and Korea), the coastal regions of Western sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and parts of North America. So as to ensure a globally comparative overview, the nine project groups agreed to make a basic distinction between subsistence-oriented and market-oriented labour relations and to analyse both. Moreover, the groups developed a classification key to standardise the types of labour relations that had been discovered across the world between 1500 and 1650, agreeing on nine types: slaves, serfs, those living in bondage, indentured labour, child labour, sharecropping, wage labour, cottage-industry labour and the self-employed who did not have any employees. The classification scheme of partially or completely commodified labour relations that underlines this typology is also of great methodological interest, which is why I will leave discussing it to the section I have devoted to methodological issues. It was complemented by a five-point questionnaire to clarify the types of work associated with the respective cultural and religious norm systems:

88 Ibid., pp. 3ff.

(1) Who (men, women, ethnic or religious groups) were allowed to carry out what work? (2) Which types of labour relations (slaves, child labour and so on) were allowed, and which were not? (3) What was the hierarchy involved in the moral assessment of labour relations? Why, for example, was free wage labour, and the social insecurity associated with it, considered to be something that should be avoided as much as possible in many regions? (4) What was the hierarchy involved in the assessment of honourable or dishonourable labour tasks? (5) What was regarded as a just reward for the respective labour relations and tasks? If one thinks about these closely coordinated standardisations together, then it becomes clear that reconstructing labour history in the early phase of capitalist development will involve a systematically developed conception of research and thus will set a precedent. As far as I can see, this is the first time that there has been a successful attempt to conceptualise the history of early capitalism from below in a way that excludes the 'Great European' point of view in a methodical and empirically-established manner.

The overall project began in 2007 with support from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), and was also supported by the Institute for Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna.⁸⁹ In parallel with this, Marcel van der Linden and Willelm van Schendel established a working group in the research department of the IISH to carry out the sixth module of the overall plan: they gave it the working title of 'Plants, People and Work' and began to reconstruct the transcontinental history of labour relations in the production, processing and marketing of plantation products: sugar cane, indigo and tobacco. A year later, after a West German Foundation had approved two years of funding, the pilot project on the history of labour relations in the 'long sixteenth century' took up its work. In addition, the groups coordinated in Vienna and Amsterdam were able to call upon an expanded pool of historical data: the 'CLIO-infra' internet database, in which the IISH had been a key participant. On top of this, the web-based 'Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations (1500–2000)', which periodically assembles in workshops, has been fostering cooperative relationships since 2008. Since 2010 researchers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Russia, Central Asia and Turkey have increasingly been drawn into the network. They participate in the analysis of labour relations in the nine major regions that have been chosen.

89 On this, and on what follows, cf. IISH, Annual Report 2008, 2009 und 2010, Amsterdam 2009–2011.

VII Methodological Issues

Now that we have looked over our shoulder at van der Linden and his colleagues putting up the walls of the edifice of global labour history and placing the roof structure on top of it, we can portray how earlier on he had arranged for its foundations and cornerstone to be concreted. When selecting the reinforcing steel and the concrete mix for this he had to look out for three particularly important criteria of quality and strength: firstly, the sustainability of the concept of labour and the labour theory of value, which are decisive for the stability of the entire edifice; secondly, that the material is sufficiently elastic to ensure that the homogenous whole can be differentiated and that labour relations can be adequately accommodated; and thirdly a robustness that can connect these two components and withstand the seismic movements in the foundation soil – the capitalist world system that expands and contract in periodic bouts. In what follows we shall restrict ourselves to these three questions: the configuration of the concept of labour for the labour theory of value, the differentiation between labour relations and relations of exploitation and a political-economic structural analysis of the capitalist world system.

Labour History and the Concept of Labour: The Labour Theory of Value as a Homogenising Constant in Labour History

In 2009, together with Max Henninger and me, van der Linden published an anthology that sought to clarify the relationship between labour history and the concept of labour.⁹⁰ In it we published contributions that provide an overview of the heterodox currents of neo-Marxism's confrontation with Marx's labour theory of value. Some authors argued for a critical development of Marx's approach. A similar number of other authors considered such an undertaking to be an illusion. In some cases, alternative options were outlined that went beyond the framework of the critique of political economy. In our concluding balance sheet, we summed up these contradictory findings and presented some considerations that could lead to the overcoming of the grievances with Marx's approach.⁹¹ However, we could not agree on whether to go a step further and to propose a new concept, and therefore refrained from doing so. In the following pages I wish to propose a discussion with Marcel van der Linden and sketch the outlines of a possible concept of the labour theory of value in which the most important insights of global labour history are taken into account.

90 Van der Linden and Roth (eds.) 2009, English version: van der Linden and Roth (eds.) 2014.

91 Van der Linden and Roth (eds.) 2009, pp. 557–600.

In the context of this appraisal I cannot systematically develop the weak points of Marx's labour theory of value that are up for discussion. I must confine myself to highlighting three particularly serious deficiencies that emerged when comparing Marx's approach with the empirical findings from labour history. First, in continuing classical political economy, Marx related the concept of labour to isolated subjects that, moreover, are exclusively defined as 'doubly free wage labourers'. Second, he interpreted the valorisation of the labour power of these wage workers as form-specific 'abstract labour', which he regarded as the intrinsic 'substance of value'; in so doing he associated his classical economic approach with the essentialism of idealist philosophy. Third, the result of these two assumptions was that, in spite of the dual character assigned to the commodity-producing labour as a unity that produces use-values and creates value, this labour is fully assimilated into the capital relation. The subjective bearer of the capacity to work is completely separated and his survival is tied to a quasi law-like 'necessary' – that is to say, minimum – average amount of the reproduction costs that is dictated to him. While Marx conceded a certain 'moral' or 'historical' scope in the setting of wages as the monetary expression of the 'commodity' of wage labour, this scope remains external to the system and has no influence on its functioning. It is thus clear: the essentialist assumptions of Marx's labour theory of value render its mediation with labour history impossible. If male and female workers are objectified and become completely subordinate to the variables of the system, then they are devoid of history. They are not in a position to influence the overall process in their favour or even to fundamentally change it. In light of this finding, other shortcomings in Marx's approach – such as the fact that free wage labourers do not actually sell their labour power to the employers, but merely rent it out in periodic intervals, which in itself points out to considerable ambivalences and room for manoeuvre in the relationship between labour and capital – appear secondary.

In what follows I would like to attempt to make some preliminary remarks on a redefinition of the concept of labour and the labour theory of value that adequately takes into account the findings of global labour history. In so doing I can draw on a further study in which Marcel van der Linden once again revised his reflections on the concept of labour in the context of the new research project on global labour relations in early capitalism (1500–1650).⁹²

92 Van der Linden 2011, pp. 23–43.

1. I shall begin with some preliminary considerations on the concept of labour:

- (1) By labour we mean purposeful human activity to appropriate and transform nature in the broadest sense (the appropriation of the bio- and geosphere, the production of the means of labour to process and transform these resources – in energy, for example – as well as the procurement and provision of information on the labour process).
- (2) The purpose of labour is the satisfaction of the human need for survival and reproduction. Already among hunters and gatherers we can distinguish between subsistence labour in the more narrow sense (hunting, fishing and gathering plants) and the provision of reproductive labour necessary to do this (making and repairing hunting tools, preparing food, building dwellings, migrating to alternating hunting areas and so on). On the one hand, this functional separation leads to the division of labour, on the other it entails human beings usually working for each other and in common.
- (3) Labour is to be distinguished from non-labour (rest, sleep, periodic breaks), anti-labour (festivals, games and so on) and military labour. Non-labour serves the reproduction of human labour power. By contrast, anti-labour is to be understood as a culturally habitualised antithesis to labour as a necessary condition of life and its reproduction.⁹³ Military labour aims to protect the household and the subsistence community or to attack other communities by means of violence. Although this only comes into its own with the development of class society, it exists in embryonic form in classless societies too, mainly in the form of forcefully conscripted dependent labour. In general, there are dynamic relationships between labour, non-labour, anti-labour and military labour.
- (4) In principle, self-determined (autonomous) and non-hierarchical labour relations are possible even in societies with a highly developed labour productivity, division of labour and technology. That this is not a theoretical construct is shown by the 'utopian knowledge' of egalitarian-structured labour and reproduction relations that has been handed down over the centuries. Moreover, as of today capitalism has not been able to completely eliminate non-hierarchical societies, even if it has largely marginalised ethnic groups. Moreover, particularly in times of crisis and

93 When, following the revolution of July 1936, the factory workers of Barcelona turned their factories into festival halls, this antithesis was clearly expressed. At the same time it was associated with the abolition of commanded (heteronormative) labour relations, namely the system of piece-work.

depression, regional subsistence economies are rebuilt over and again. By no means do people fall back on these for consciously anti-capitalist motives ('the alternative economy'). It would, for example, be very illuminating if a contemporary study were to be conducted on the revival of subsistence labour in numerous regions of Eastern, South Eastern Europe and Latin America, as well as on its links to the non-equivalent networks of natural economies still present in those regions.

- (5) Previous hypotheses on the concept of work can be summarised by the following statement: a household's standard of living corresponds to the total amount of its members' subsistence and reproductive labour.

11. However, in pre-capitalist societies too, labour relations that are tied to relations of exploitation to varying degrees are dominant. Households and subsistence communities are forced to pay tribute to landlords and/or religious or secular authorities. A few additional observations are required to clarify the effects that this has had on labour relations.

- (1) Partially or completely heteronomous labour relations are no longer based on an insight, based on one's own drive, into the subsistence and reproductive labour (commitment) that it is necessary to perform from time to time. In accordance with the increase in the additional heteronomous labour tasks, these labour relations must be complemented by components of coercion and compensation. Coercion and compensation are thus associated – at least in part – with the realisation of labour capacity to the benefit of third parties. They become integral parts of alienated labour.
- (2) As a rule, the implementation and/or acquisition of what is produced by heteronomous labour occurs – if not always⁹⁴ – through the use of coercion and violence. Its aim is to subjugate subsistence labour households and societies as much as possible by depriving them of their most important bases of existence. The most diverse practices are used to dispossess societies based on subsistence labour. Already in pre-capitalist societies these lead to the emergence of a comprehensive spectrum of heteronomous labour relations. The most commonly used method was – and still is today – land acquisition, the enforcement of patrimonial rule.
- (3) In the heteronomous labour that must be performed in addition to subsistence labour, goods and services are produced that have a use-value for

94 In religious communities, for example.

their appropriators. This use-value is a measurable quantity and is taken from the households and communities engaged in subsistence labour in defined quantities (20 bushels of hay, 10 tons of wrought iron, five chickens, 100 kg of wheat and so on). In this respect, in contrast to the definitions stemming from the tradition of political economy, which also includes Marx, a preliminary stage of value manifests itself in the use-value of the surplus product, something that is separate from the goods and services required to live.

- (4) We can thus summarise: the labour necessary to live in addition to the heteronomous labour forced on a working-class household represents a combination of previous subsistence/reproductive labour and the heteronomous, use-value producing labour and reproductive labour to the benefit of third parties.

III. The capitalist mode of production shapes these labour relations, but frequently also transforms them in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The households and communities of the subsistence economy are often destroyed and most of the time must be rebuilt elsewhere under extremely deteriorated working and reproductive conditions. Insofar as these communities are preserved, their members feel compelled to devote increasing amounts of their workload to producing marketable goods in order to transform them into commodities, exchange them for cash and to use the money to safeguard their subsistence sector. In addition, among sharecroppers there are periodic payments to the landowner and to the state authorities that are in the process of formation. The balance of the subsistence households is upset as a result and they are ruined by bad harvests, so that after the failure of the operations brought about to adjust for these bad harvests (overusing common land, renting tools and livestock, selling parts of the seed, the land and so on) there ensues an exodus from the country. These processes of pauperisation aided and abetted the decision to turn to cottage industry, which was being exploited by putting-out capitalists, and/or to send some members of the household (women, children and men) into the emerging manufactories and factories in order to stabilise their standard of living with the money earned there.

In the wake of the spread of the capitalist mode of production, then, the households of the working poor are exposed to a sequence of dispossession, valorisation and exploitation. The mutually dependent events in this sequence are particularly important when it comes to the differentiation of labour relations that will occupy us in the following subsection. For now we will merely outline how the spread of the capitalist mode of production generally impacts on the living standards of the working poor.

- (1) The subsistence sector remains in existence, but generally it is no longer sufficient to secure an adequate standard of living. In addition, the capitalist social formation increasingly tends to intervene in the household in a regulative manner (compulsory education for children, the displacement of the mutual benefit societies by social transfer payments and so on.) Nevertheless, subsistence labour represents a magnitude that is firmly rooted socially and culturally and as such should be taken into consideration when advancing from the concept of labour to the labour theory of value.
- (2) The amount of heteronomous labour in the combined labour of the household doubles. Not only are goods and services produced for anonymous market partners and exchanged for money, but the labour capacity of the members of the household is to a greater or lesser extent commodified and exploited. As a result of this market-economic transformation, use-value is shaped by exchange-value, the monetary expression of value.
- (3) However, the commodification of the products and performance of labour always remains limited in two respects. To this day, working-class households preside over a specific sector within which they perform self-determined subsistence and reproductive labour. Yet the realisation of their labour capacity (valorisation and utilisation) is never complete, apart from in the special case of being 'worked to death'.
- (4) These observations may be summarised as follows: the standard of living in a proletarian household subordinated to the capitalist mode of production necessitates an aggregate of labour and reproduction tasks, made up of subsistence labour, and the labour that capitalism has valorised and exploited. This valorised and utilised proportion of the total volume of labour represents the working-class household's combined labour and reproduction value created within a given period of time.
- (5) Since the valorisation and utilisation of the labour power of the individual household members has a different structure depending on their respective labour relations, accordingly it is necessary to consider, case-by-case, the labour relations combined in a particular household (indentured labour, sharecropping, child labour, self-employment, wage labour and so on). Individual labour and reproduction values can be determined from this, the remuneration from which adds to the household budget and in this way forms the household's combined labour and reproduction value. The combined labour and reproduction value remains separate from the results of domestic and extra-domestic subsistence labour and to varying degrees it supplements the living standards of the working poor household gained from this subsistence labour.

- (6) In accordance with the respective level of intensity of the valorisation and exploitation of individual labour capacity, in a defined period of study products and services are created that form a unity of use-value production and value creation. The use-values can be measured in physical quantities (kilograms, metres, the number of products and so on), and the corresponding results of value-creation can be measured in quantities of money.⁹⁵
- (7) Since the subject realising his labour capacity always remains tied to this process of valorisation and utilisation, the use-value or quantity of value he attains in a given period of time always depends on the distribution of power between the workers and the employers. The employers make use of the instruments of coercion, compensation, and work ethics available to them in a given historical situation in order to attain the largest amount of goods or value possible; they then appropriate a certain portion of this total amount as surplus product or surplus value. They are opposed by the male and female workers: they too preside over many courses of action in order to assert their 'obstinate' ideas on how the production process is shaped, the extent to which their labour power is sold and their share of the total product or total value.
- (8) In order to test the validity of the concept, van der Linden's key module, the value of a household's labour and its reproduction, could be used to reclassify a critique of political economy. A few other variables could also be introduced, such as the qualifications of the bearer of labour capacity, the correlated technological state of development of the labour and production processes and the resulting consequences for the calculation of the values and prices of the capitalist processes of production and exploitation.
- (8.1) Labour power's productive power or potential for value creation depends (a) on its output density regulated by coercion, compensation, obstinacy and work ethic; (b) on the qualifications or ability to create value on the part of the subject realising (*Entäussern*) his capacity for labour and (c) on the production system's state of technological development and labour organisation or its capital value⁹⁶ – whether it be a plantation, manufacture, factory or net-

95 There are numerous external factors that subsequently influence this quantity of money, in the first instance the problem of transforming values to prices and exchange rates. I cannot go into these factors within the framework of this article.

96 Rather unfortunately, Karl Marx called the value composition of capital corresponding to its technical composition the 'organic composition of capital' and erroneously assumed that, in the course of capitalist development, this would increase with the inevitability of a

worked enterprise. This productive power determines the amount of goods or values in a given time period. It then can be calculated from the ratio of the production yield to the volume of work. The potential for production or value generation can be measured individually, but also for all members of the household together. With the introduction of appropriate units of workers, skills and technology profiles, as well as the knowledge of the amount of goods or values created in a certain period, an overall economic calculation is also possible.

- (8.2) If we divide the total amount of remuneration (wages, fees/royalties and so on) by the goods or values created in this period of time, then we obtain information about the unit costs of remuneration, which in conventional terminology are referred to as wage unit costs. Here too, with the introduction of the appropriate aggregate figures, it is possible to calculate the average unit costs of remuneration in a given economic unit. Since the unit costs of remuneration represent the most important variable in determining a production system's cost prices, they determine – together with other, clearly secondary, variables – price levels and thereby ultimately this economic unit's competitiveness on the world market. Put simply: the reduction of labour costs through wage dumping and the increase in productivity associated with it is the most important lever of capitalist competition, making it possible to undercut world market prices in a sustained manner.

On the Differentiation of Labour Relations: The Concept of 'Exploitation'

For years, Marcel van der Linden strove for a classification of labour relations that could trace the conditions that constituted them as well as their development trends, transitional forms and changes.⁹⁷ He designed a typology made up

law. Yet if technological innovations are accompanied by a reduction in unit labour costs then capital value (or the organic composition of capital) can also fall in the medium-term, which entails a corresponding increase in the rate of profit. This simple observation shows that Marx's assumption of a 'law of the tendency' for the organic composition of capital to rise and a correlating 'tendential fall in the rate of profit' is a flawed one. The variables, which in Marx have an erroneously unilinear direction, should be treated as open-ended. As we are dealing with a problem that lies far beyond the labour theory of value, I cannot go into it in more detail here.

97 Van der Linden 1999, pp. 7–18; van der Linden 2005, pp. 7–28; Marcel van der Linden 2008, Chapter 2, pp. 17–38.

of six distinctive features: (1) Who owns labour power and its associated subject: does the worker, the employer or a third party have control over the worker's own person? (2) Who owns the work objects and products of labour? (3) Who owns the means of labour and the means of production? (4) What is the relationship regarding labour output: what goes to the employer and what goes to the worker? (5) What material compensation does the worker receive for his work, and how does this compensation come about? (6) What is the worker's relationship to the other members in the household of the working poor?

This typology was first applied to an empirical field of research by the pilot group for the study of labour relations and work ethics in the 'long sixteenth century' (1500–1650). By means of the above questionnaire, the pilot group agreed on the following nine classifications:⁹⁸

- (1) Slaves. The employer is the proprietor of the worker's own person/labour power, the means and products of labour and its yield as well; he periodically provides means of subsistence for the reproduction of the slave.
- (2) Serf/bonded labour. The employer owns the means and the products of labour, as well as its yield. The serf presides over his own person and his labour power. He is allowed means of subsistence for his own reproduction.
- (3) Hired slave. The employer is the proprietor of the worker's own person/labour power, but shares the products and means of labour, its yield and a part of his salary with him. In addition to his share of the wage the hired slave also receives means of subsistence.
- (4) Indentured labour. The indentured labourer owns his own person/his labour power, but the employer can dispose of it for a prolonged period of time – at least two years. In addition, the entrepreneur owns the products of labour, its yield and the means of production. The indentured labourer receives means of subsistence for his own reproduction.
- (5) Children. Up to a certain age children are the property of their parents. The employer owns the products, means of labour and its yield. The parents receive a wage or means of subsistence on behalf of their children.
- (6) Sharecroppers. Here, relations with the employer are particularly intricate. The sharecropper owns his own person/his labour power. The employer and/or the sharecropper own the products of labour, and this is

⁹⁸ NN [Marcel van der Linden], *Globalisierungsgeschichte*, Chart, pp. 9f. Since all types of labour relations could be associated with the household, the sixth question was omitted.

also the case with the means of labour. Labour yield is divided up between the employer and the sharecropper. The sharecropper ekes out his existence from a portion of the labour output.

- (7) Home workers / cottage-industry workers. The employer appropriates the products of labour and its yield. The home worker disposes of his own person/labour power and the means of labour himself. His reproduction is ensured by wage payments.
- (8) Wage labourers. The wage labourer is the proprietor of his own person and labour power. The employer owns the products of labour and its yield. He secures the reproduction of the wage worker through wage payments. The ownership of the means of labour and of the means of production can partly be found in the hands of the worker and those of the company.
- (9) Self-employed workers without employees. The self-employed worker is the proprietor of his person/labour power and his means of labour and production. His labour product can belong to the employer or the self-employed worker, but in contrast the yield is the exclusive property of the employer. The self-employed worker covers the costs of his own reproduction from sales.

This classification scheme will undoubtedly be modified even further in the course of empirical research. Nevertheless, it represents an important working basis. Van der Linden obtained it from a meticulous analysis of the relations between workers and employers in the process of the valorisation (commodification) of labour relations that accompanied the transition to commodity production. This particular focus was not accidental. In the second half of the 1990s, Marcel van der Linden grappled with the concepts of a post-Marxist tendency that had emerged within the environment of 'critical theory'. It called itself the 'Krisis' group and was mainly represented by Robert Kurz, Ernst Lohoff and Moishe Postone. In these years he made their views on the functioning and the dynamics of capitalism his own – albeit with some reservations.⁹⁹ This school of thought defined capitalism as a dynamic, competition-driven system that increasingly transforms society and the natural environment into commodities and subjects them to the laws of the market economy.¹⁰⁰ For this

99 Van der Linden 1997, pp. 447–58; also in van der Linden, Chapter 13, pp. 205–15; also in: Marcel van der Linden 2003a.

100 On this, and on what follows, cf. the programmatic text of the Krisis group and the Marx exegesis based on it written by its best-known exponent, Moishe Postone: Kurz and Lohoff 1989.

group, all relations of labour, production, distribution and consumption are subjected to this iron 'logic of commodities'. The core of capitalist commodity production is formed by social labour in general, which, in its value form as 'abstract labour', drives forward the commodification of society and turns the working class into an integral part of capital accumulation. For this group, it was therefore urgently necessary to bid farewell to the assumption that capitalist society is still characterised by material class conflicts. Whoever still has their sights on the 'class struggle' in today's world has thus become a slave to a 'fetish' which overlooks the fact that 'abstract labour' determines the form of capitalist commodity society in a totalising fashion.

Perhaps van der Linden temporarily drew closer to this approach because the conclusions of the 'Krisis' group accorded with the axioms of Neo-Ricardianism that were so widespread on the English-speaking left. According to the latter, in the all-overpowering and competition-driven market economy, commodities could only be produced and distributed by commodities.¹⁰¹ Whereas the 'Krisis' group, and Postone in particular, made the essentialist tendencies of Marx's labour theory of value into an absolute system solely derived from the determination of the value form, the Neo-Ricardians, on the other hand, retreated to the market-economic doctrines of classical political economy because they despaired at the desiderata and breaking points in Marx's approach. Nevertheless, the neo-Ricardian concept of capitalism boasts enormous strengths too. It allowed van der Linden to recognise that the valorisation of nature is the counterpart of the commodification of labour – something that Marx, and the dogmatism that invoked his name, had completely faded out. It also allowed him to heed something that had already been observed by the German political economist, Franz Oppenheimer, namely that the wage worker's labour power is not a commodity like any other. Critical Marxologists have been thinking about these issues for decades, but until now they had not found a convincing answer.

Against this background, it became clear that the way that van der Linden's standardised the labour relations that appear in a capitalist market economy should be reconsidered. On its own, the problem-field of commodification (valorisation) leads to a tendency towards homogenisation that leaves little room for further differentiation.¹⁰² It seems to me that such differentiation is only possible if labour relations are related to an overarching category: exploitation.

101 Cf. the main work of this tendency's leading exponent, Piero Sraffa: Sraffa 1972.

102 Cf. also the contribution of David Mayer and Berthold Unfried in this volume.

When, how and under what conditions are people exploited? In the context of the capitalist mode of production, people are exploited if firstly they are separated from their conditions of subsistence; second are subjected to the capitalist mode of production; and third have to put up with the valorisation of their labour capacity in the capitalist production and distribution process. Only if we take a close look at the relations between the dispossession, commodification and valorisation of labour capacity will we be capable of a critical overall analysis of labour relations as highly differentiated and clearly distinct relations of exploitation.

- (1) The dispossession of households engaged in subsistence labour can take very different forms: the seizure of harvests, livestock, seeds, soil, working equipment, the products of labour and so on. Such acts of violence are often associated with evictions, which may even be the primary objective behind the expropriations and looting. Yet in other cases they take place within the framework of the law, like when the Ethiopian government confiscated the pasture land of the village communities and sold them to Saudi Arabian and Indian investors. Such expropriation processes are by no means limited to rural subsistence economies, however. They can also assume the character of a devaluation of highly qualified labour capacity, like for example in the current processes of de-industrialisation in the transatlantic region, which in turn have a long past history.¹⁰³ In this case, the 'de-commodified' male and female workers are usually forced to look around for new – and often much worse – labour relations. A third, often underestimated component of dispossession is the deprivation of rights, which also aims to encourage people to accept new and/or more poorly remunerated labour relations. Recent pension policies in Germany are a typical example of this: in the past 15 years the retirement funds of the subaltern classes have been reduced to such an extent that pervasive poverty is rapidly emerging among the old. In this case, hardly a dozen laws to this effect were sufficient to take from millions of people the social rights that they had secured over the course of decades. As a result, more and more senior citizens are forced to hire themselves out on the low-wage markets as a way of supplementing their now precarious household incomes. As these examples show, the 'primitive accumulation' associated with social dispossession is still taking place today. In all likelihood it will only grind to a halt when the entire system has come to an end. There

103 Cf. also the superb anthology on this subject: Altena and van der Linden (eds.) 2002.

are thus three main types of 'dispossession': dispossession in the narrow sense, devaluation and disenfranchisement.

- (2) As long as the processes of dispossession that must be set in motion again and again are successful, then hardly anybody will be able to prevent the capitalists from 'commodifying' the people that have been robbed of their means of subsistence, devalued and disenfranchised. Here we encounter exploitation's second level of operation that van der Linden has examined and classified in detail. The process of commodification outlines the second stage of the exploitation that leads to proletarianisation. The nature and extent of this are mainly determined by the resulting distribution of property rights. Who disposes of the worker's own person, his labour power, the means of production, the products of labour and its yield: the worker, the employer or a possible third party?
- (3) The valorisation of labour power is followed by the third stage of its exploitation in the capitalist production process. It is well-known that Karl Marx called this 'subsumption' and distinguished between two levels of intensity, 'formal' and 'real' subsumption. I would like to associate myself with this concept. Yet for obvious reasons it should be differentiated even further and correlated with the corresponding degrees of the intensity of value creation and the production of surplus value. Under this premise, I would like to propose the following tentative classification:
 - (3.1) Indirect, formal, real and absolute subsumption/value creation
 - (A) We characterise as indirect subsumption/value-creation socio-cultural constellations where the subsistence households and communities remain intact but are integrated into the capitalist mode of production through the expanding world market. The Soviet village communities whose agrarian surplus product was siphoned off – with little success – during the so-called NEP period (1921–9), so as to exchange it for modern machinery and equipment on the world market are a typical example of this. Phenomena of this kind can also be observed today in many so-called developing countries. In all these cases the indirect subsumption of value creation is linked to indirect forms of value creation where surplus value is not yet generated, but where it assumes the form of a surplus flowing into the economy.
 - (B) In formal subsumption/formal value-creation the employers establish direct contact with the subsistence households. They make available to them primary products and money wages or wages in kind in order to exploit their labour power in

their unchanged home environment (the putting-out system). Another variant consists of bringing together in a single division of labour several handicraft trades whose cooperation is coordinated and controlled by the employer. Moreover, the employer appropriates the whole product, which correlates with a corresponding volume of value and usually surplus value as well. Since the employer himself does not yet directly control the processes of production, we are dealing with absolute surplus value, i.e. with the non-compensated time equivalent of the combined volume of labour.

- (c) We can talk of the real subsumption/valorisation of labour capacity from the moment when the employer himself intervenes in and shapes the labour process, subjecting it to his control. In the Marxist tradition, this moment is generally equated with the introduction of machinery as a particularly effective means of force to directly subject the labour process to an increasingly standardised work discipline and intensification. This fact is undeniable, as long as it is not improperly generalised: already in the pre-industrial periods the employers were on the same wavelength about driving the expenditure of labour to the most extreme limits of what was physically and mentally possible. Often, the slave 'gangs' of the colonial plantation economy only worked with very few, primitive tools, and yet an enormous yield was squeezed from them through meticulous guidelines for the tasks and cycles of work. Things were similar with the 'daily tasks' that had been established since the early nineteenth century and which in the 1930s reappeared on the Soviet collective farms. Two decades later they were copied by the agronomists of the People's Republic of China. Squeezing maximum output and thus the greatest possible absolute and relative surplus value is in no way dependent on the production system's level of technological development. Yet from a historical perspective the reverse conclusion also appears impermissible: on the side of the workers too, strikes, sabotage and early forms of 'machine breaking' – especially arson and taking managers as prisoners – had always been integral components of their commitment to a suitable restriction of working hours and intensity.
- (d) With the proposal for the introduction of an additional category to classify extreme forms of the production-specific util-

isation of labour capacity, we once again enter new territory. We should label as the absolute subsumption or absolute valorisation of labour such constellations in which the bearers of labour power are either partly or completely denied the possibility of realising their interests in adequate remuneration and in a restriction on the expenditure of their labour. Such constellations can particularly be found in slave labour, because slaves are dehumanised, completely disempowered subjects who are subjected to the unlimited power of their masters and in extreme cases can be severely mistreated or even killed. Two different levels of intensity in the production-specific components of exploitation can once again be observed in this scenario. The first case involves slaves who, in spite of their dehumanisation, are preserved in a state of being able to work for as long as possible, because they represent fixed capital. Secondly, however, there are also situations in which this is not the case, at least temporarily, and as far as I can see there have been such constellations in all stages of the development of capitalism. For example, in 1999–2000 there was a famous exhibition in Genoa on the history of Genoese supremacy in the world system of the sixteenth century. At this exhibition there were large-scale paintings that invited the observer to assume the perspective of Genoese merchant-patricians looking down on their ports. If one followed their gaze, then one encountered disproportionately large galleys set into the picture, on which the slave overseers were brandishing their whips against the slave sailors, who were lined up in two columns. These slaves had been separated from their households and had a very short life expectancy. The lives of those slaves whose labour power was abused in the construction of the Auschwitz-Monowitz plant of IG Farben between 1941 and 1944 were also very short. Upon their arrival, the household members who had been deported alongside them that had been declared unfit to work were separated from them and killed in gas chambers. In contrast, the prisoners declared fit to work were hired out to the management of the IG Farben plant by their owners, the ss slave administrative body, and the intensity of their exploitation on the construction site was such that on average they lost their ability to work within five months. As soon as this happened, the work slaves

were returned to their owners and also killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

- (3.2) We can thus distinguish between four levels of intensity in the subsumption/valorisation of labour-power within the capitalist production process. Depending on the access that the employers have to the processes of labour, they will deploy specific instruments of labour organisation and production technology and combine them with the most varied forms of remuneration. A more detailed discussion of the fields of action that this opens up – something that van der Linden too has increasingly taken into consideration – is beyond the scope of this appraisal. Nonetheless I would like to highlight two particularly important aspects, namely the importance of technological innovation and the simultaneous exploitation of all forms of subsumption and valorisation by a single business unit.
- (E) In conjunction with targeted interventions into the organisation of labour, since the sixteenth century technological innovation has accelerated the structural transformation of labour relations with increasing rapidity: on the one hand it has led to the emergence of completely new work relations, on the other it is an important variable that constantly shakes up and restructures the ensemble of labour relations. In this respect, we have good reason to incorporate the history of technology and science into global labour history.
- (F) The fact that the ‘global players’ on the world market ‘tap into’ the four main types of subsumption at the same time and combine the results from this division of labour into an overall product, or overall values, strikes me as equally significant. Their operations have a dual character and are thus of equal importance to both global labour history and world economic history: from the perspective of those ‘below’ and those ‘above’, globally-operating companies join together the non-capitalist world with the various stages of capitalist development (early, high, late and neo-capitalism) and, it should be noted, they always do this at the same time. Seen in this light, the dialectic between the world market and the world working class manifests itself in an exemplary manner. One of the first globally operating networked enterprises was the Dutch East India Company, founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Although its main business occurred in reciprocally organised transcontinental long-distance trade and it was thus

rare that already integrated total products were developed, even then the Dutch East India Company joined together the working class from three different directions: the plantation workers, the transport workers (dockers and seafarers) and the Western European craftsmen (*Handwerker*) and manufacturing workers.

Van der Linden has repeatedly highlighted this particular aspect. It should not be difficult, then, to integrate the different degrees of intensity of the subsumption and valorisation of labour interconnected with each other in the production process into an overall typology of labour relations.

Global Labour History and the Concept of Capitalism: A Second Attempt

At the beginning of the new millennium van der Linden stepped up his efforts to integrate global labour history into a historically-based structural analysis of capitalism. In this respect the approaches of the 'Krisis' group and the Neo-Ricardians, both of which viewed capitalism as an all-crushing 'commodification machine' that made everything uniform, had little to offer. It was thus obvious that van der Linden would grapple with a further school of thought that had been causing such sensation since the second half of the 1970s: the theory of the capitalist world system developed by the Fernand Braudel Center in New York.¹⁰⁴ In this line of research several intellectual traditions, all of which were rooted in the critique of political economy, new social history and sociology, worked together and, because of their multi-disciplinary origins, had the tools to query issues that were often hastily introduced as a priori assumptions. Conditions were thus favourable to attempt to steer towards a new synthesis between a historical and economic-structural analysis of capitalism.

In fact, the concept of the world system had a lot to offer a globally oriented labour historiography. The world system proceeds from the existence of an internationally operating capitalist division of labour, which is integrated into multiple political territories. This interdependent whole consists of a core zone, a periphery and a semi-periphery, whereby the core exploits the periphery through unequal exchange relations in world trade, whereas economically the semi-periphery finds itself in the middle. Moreover this system is dynamic: it evolves in cyclical periods (long waves), with peripheral regions

¹⁰⁴ Van der Linden 2001, pp. 423–59. Reprinted in van der Linden 2008, Chapter 13, pp. 287–318.

rising up to core countries and, inversely, core regions falling back into the periphery. Moreover, in the context of these movements in both directions new hegemonic powers emerge over and again, succeeding each other following fierce rivalry. This dynamic system is capitalist, because its economy is based on profit-driven market production. It developed in the sixteenth century and in the nineteenth century it conquered the most distant corners of the globe.

What did the critics say about this new grand theory? They confronted its chief exponent, Immanuel Wallerstein, with three counter-arguments. Firstly they accused him and his collaborators of having over relied on evidence from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century when defining the perspectives of the world system, leading to false projections back in time; for them, world trade in the previous centuries had developed far less quickly and had not yielded higher than average profits, for example. Second, the whole model is much too functionalist and deterministic in orientation; it does not allow sufficient leeway for coincidences, for turning points brought about through politics or for the complex chains of causality in the historical and economic process. And thirdly, by presenting in a unilinear fashion the development and expansion of the world system as the global spread of a capitalism that came into being in Europe, it implicitly follows a Eurocentric point of view.

With his own particular thoroughness, van der Linden weighed up the pros and cons of the controversial arguments. The world system theorists' historical view of labour relations was particularly important to him when doing this. They proceeded from a structural model that was oriented towards the primacy of the sphere of circulation and thereby made it possible for van der Linden's classification of labour relations to call on the distribution of ownership with regards to labour capacity, the means of production and value-creation that underlies the process of commodification. As a consequence, all those who received as reimbursement merely a portion of the values they created, values which were then transformed into commodities for others, were considered proletarians. These labour relations that were dictated to the proletarians were very diverse, ranging from slave labour through sharecropping and self-employment to wage labour. Moreover, in the three-tiered hierarchy of the world system, labour relations exhibited a specific distribution pattern, which was then mixed up again by the market mechanisms of supply and demand. In addition there were further indirect components that made the concept attractive to labour history with a transcontinental orientation: its demonstration of the interconnectedness of labour relations as a result of the formation of world-wide commodity chains, its periodisation of colonial expansion, its linking of upswings and setbacks in working-class activism to the cyclical periodicity of wages and prices and numerous other cultural-historical aspects as well.

These points of contact notwithstanding, van der Linden's criticisms were grave. World-system theory could only be linked to the conceptualisation of global labour history if its deterministic and Euro-centric characteristics had been overcome. There was, however, another caveat that called into question the concept of capitalism that van der Linden himself had hitherto shared. Was it really sufficient to define capitalism exclusively by the market economy – and hence by its sphere of circulation? And did it not seem appropriate to define the sphere of capital production and accumulation themselves as a further structural level, with these spheres linked together by the world market in its various stages of development? In this context, several critics pointed to an elaborate explanation of the development of the capitalist world system, with which van der Linden had particularly dealt in the context of his study of the Soviet Union. Now he felt compelled to once again take note of the complete works of the Belgian social economist, Ernest Mandel.¹⁰⁵

In November 2003 the IISH, together with the Ernest Mandel Foundation, organised a conference that appraised Mandel's contribution to the historical theory of global capitalism.¹⁰⁶ In an opening speech written together with Jan Willem Stut, van der Linden reconstructed the theses in which Mandel had grappled with the crisis of Marxist economic theory since the beginning of the 1960s and arrived at a new understanding of world capitalism.¹⁰⁷ According to Mandel the dynamics of capitalism could only be understood if they were not deduced from a single factor – as previous successors of Marx had done¹⁰⁸ – but were seen as a configuration of several partially independent variables that constituted the essential parameters of the capitalist mode of production. The key to this was how these variables relate to each other in their respective historical environments and influence the rate of profit as the decisive factor in the economic cycle. This was an important step forward, but it was difficult to determine the concrete interactions of the individual variables since they can in part behave differently depending on the respective context: on one occa-

105 Ibid., pp. 316 ff.

106 The revised conference presentations were published four years later in *Historical Materialism*. Cf. *Historical Materialism. Research in Critical Marxist Theory*, 15, 1.

107 Van der Linden and Stutje 2007, pp. 37–45.

108 Namely Marx's reproduction schema in *Capital* Volume II. Mandel had realised that the reproduction schemes were only suited to understanding a phase of stability that was limited in time, in which the two main departments of the capitalist process of production balanced each other out. In contrast, theoreticians writing after Marx (Rosa Luxemburg, Henryk Grossmann and Otto Bauer) had attempted to apply this narrowly defined model to the system as a whole, and had therefore failed.

sion they function as a cause and on another as an effect. Mandel designed the model of a dynamic structure that expands in stages and that is made up of three subsystems that are linked together by the world market's mechanisms of competition. These three subsystems are – in the words of Mandel – the pre-capitalist, the semi-capitalist and the fully developed capitalist mode of production. Their relations to each other are extremely conflictual: the segments that find themselves in a state of 'primitive accumulation' constantly attempt to catch up with the developed sectors. They are however, subjected to a mechanism of 'uneven development' that produces unstable hybrid forms in which highly developed and 'backward' components co-exist.¹⁰⁹

Undoubtedly, this model of world capitalism has strengths that are lacking in the concept of the world system. Mandel was far better able to explain the causes of the dynamics of capitalism by establishing a correlation between the accumulation of capital – in its more or less developed forms – and the expansion of world trade. In so doing, it was, furthermore, possible to work out the different modalities and forms of regulation to which global labour relations are subject; and in this turn allowed for a better consideration of the role of worker activism.

Yet these positive findings also come against deficits and gaps which greatly impede them operating to the benefit of labour historiography. Mandel accepted the Marxist labour theory of value without scrutiny and thereby fell into a methodological asymmetry that blocked his view of the global diversity of labour relations and led him to assume that in the developed sector of the capitalist mode of production only free wage relations were possible. The historical periodisation in his approach also begins far too late – in the eighteenth century – and in addition his division of capitalism into three stages of competitive capitalism, imperialism and late capitalism turned out to be over-simplistic. A third drawback I see is that Mandel underestimated the role of the regulatory systems in the 'take-off' of capitalism both historically and today. He was therefore unable to answer the question of why the capitalist mode of production's breakthrough to the world economy did not occur in the Indian Mughal Empire, in China or in the Ottoman Empire, despite the accumulation of money capital, technological development and the commercialisation of exchange relations being far more developed there than in the Southern European city republics of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries or subsequently in the Netherlands. In the Orient, the central political adminis-

109 Van der Linden dealt with this aspect in a further conference paper: Van der Linden 2007e, pp. 145–65.

tration remained separate from the driving forces of primitive accumulation. By contrast, in the Southern European city-patriciates, and later in the Netherlands, the political administration was converted into an economic regulatory system that was subservient to the criteria of the expansion of trade and capital accumulation. Consequently, the 'coming out' of capitalism was due to the emergence of a homogeneous ruling class that united political power with the economic power of capital formation and then proceeded together against the working poor.

And so it was clear: neither the world-system model of the Fernand Braudel Centre nor the project for an economic-historical analysis of world capitalism promoted by Ernest Mandel were sufficiently developed to provide suitably solid foundations for the structural conceptualisation of global labour history. However, other alternatives were not in sight. In this respect, then, until today global labour history has been a construction site. The deficits of political economy, probably its most important neighbouring discipline, necessitate independent efforts in this neglected field of research. In the meantime the political-economic conceptualisation of world capitalism has fallen so far behind that the results of global labour historiography, which has been storming ahead, threaten to conceal its precarious condition. I think that this imbalance is problematic because sooner or later it will also have a negative impact on labour history itself. It is therefore quite understandable that van der Linden called on the 'unbelievers' to enter into a dialogue with the exponents of the Fernand Braudel Center and other similar initiatives so as to reactivate a historically substantiated critique of the political economy of the capitalist world system.¹¹⁰

VIII History as Source of Analysis and as Learning Process

My journey through van der Linden's workshops and networks is coming to an end. I could only outline the most important compartments and nodal points and present them for discussion. For the most part this involved integrating analysis and programmatic perspectives that van der Linden has presented in dialogue with the research findings of labour history across the world, as well as those of its neighbouring fields of research. By no means is van der Linden merely somebody who systematises and guides. He is well aware that the scientific community's paradigms and fieldwork not only have to be investigated

110 Van der Linden 2001, p. 318.

methodologically but also have to be verified (or falsified) through one's own empirical research. Then there are the white spots on the maps of socio-historical scientific research. In so far as they block the process of cognition, they necessitate independent source research. I can only allude to this equally immense area of work carried out by van der Linden with a few examples.¹¹¹

- (1) Van der Linden owes a typical case of supplementary research in unpublished archival sources to the understanding of the epistemological concept with which Ernest Mandel structured his investigations on the global dynamics of the capitalist mode of production. Mandel was a pupil of the economist Roman Rosdolsky. Rosdolsky provided him with insight into the logical inadmissibility of applying Marx's reproduction and equilibrium schemes to the economy as a whole. On this basis, in contact with Rosdolsky and other dialogue partners, Mandel developed his concept of several partially independent variables, which I have just discussed. In his publications Mandel did not comment on these issues. Only by studying his extensive correspondence was it possible to comment on them.¹¹² Yet even further-reaching issues, such as the problem of the unequal and hybrid-like development of capitalist 'latecomers', can only be answered by consulting additional archival sources. Moreover, they invite biographical research on other economists who were involved in this area of research, such as Alexander Gerschenkron, who comes from the Austro-Marxist tradition.¹¹³
- (2) The number of historians who in their studies also systematically draw on written traditions from previous centuries is quite low. Marcel van der Linden belongs to this small group. By no means does he only fall back on these often underrated traditions when – as in the reconstruction of labour relations between 1500 and 1650 – the source base is narrow. He also tapped into the literature of the time when reconstructing the international workers' movement of the nineteenth century, such as the German-language literature on the US-American working class published between 1865 and 1914.¹¹⁴ In this context he became aware of the publications of the economist August Sartorius von Waltershausen, who towards the end of the nineteenth century published three books and five partly groundbreaking studies on working hours, forms of struggle, the internal

111 Additional examples can be found in Angelika Ebbinghaus's contribution to this volume.

112 Van der Linden and Stutje 2007, pp. 39 ff.

113 Cf. van der Linden 2007f, p. 162; Marcel van der Linden 2012, pp. 553–62.

114 Van der Linden and Zieren 1995, pp. 579–87.

structures of trade unions, mutual benefit societies and the effects of technological innovation on labour relations. Together with David Montgomery, van der Linden edited his three most important essays written on the USA and additionally, in cooperation with Gregory Zieren, contributed to an excellent biographical study on von Waltershausen in which he evaluated previously disregarded archival sources.¹¹⁵ This was an important discovery. Who would have thought that such weighty contributions to the analysis of North American labour relations could be found in the early work of the later racist and 'world power' propagandist?

- (3) Van der Linden also knew how to make the results of ethnographic fieldwork his own to such an extent that they became a first-rate empirical source. He was able to do this with the aid of a well thought-out selection procedure. He concentrated on fieldwork from the beginning of the twentieth century where the 'participating observers' repeatedly seek out certain ethnic groups. This results in insights into the transformation of labour relations and their interaction with the socio-cultural environment in a concentrated period of time. As far as I can see, van der Linden's synopsis of the ethnological studies of Iatmul people in Papua New Guinea is unique.¹¹⁶ In this way he was able to open up a case study that traces capitalism's gradual subsumption of an ethnic group that was structured in an egalitarian fashion and show how even the urban settlements of the Iatmul migrant workers which have come into being since the 1970s remain shaped by the dominance of their family clans.
- (4) When in the second half of the 1970s Marcel van der Linden began to cut himself loose from the authoritarian structures of traditional Marxism, he had numerous dialogue partners. For him the most important of these was the West German educationalist and labour historian Gottfried Mergner (1940–99). Mergner was a critical scientist who had emerged from the anti-authoritarian movement and who was occupied by the problem of why important learning processes were always blocked over and over again even in the milieu of the workers' movement that had an emancipatory approach. Mergner came to realise that the learning processes created in social practice are ambivalent and always lead to relapses into models of behaviour that are authoritarian and exclude minorities. A further retarding component is Eurocentrism, the inhibiting role of which Mergner had recognised as a result of his intensive study of

115 Van der Linden and Zieren, 1998, pp. 28–64.

116 Van der Linden 2008, Chapter 15, pp. 339–58.

African cultures. Since Mergner died early, the synthesis of his partial insights into the ambivalent character of Eurocentrism, its social barriers to learning processes and its psychological enclosures remained incomplete. Mergner nonetheless managed to shed light on the grey areas of 'learning', the key problem of each and every emancipatory perspective for society. Van der Linden acknowledged the work of his friend and companion on several occasions and edited his most important writings in English.¹¹⁷

IX Conclusion

It was not easy to portray and present for discussion van der Linden's interrelated areas of research and analysis. Their dimensions are impressive. Van der Linden is a living example of the idea that, as complex as our world is, it can be understood full well if the researcher locates himself in the structures of information and communication available today.

In addition, there are his services in the field of scientific organisation. In the first place it is due to the research director of the IISH that the International of labour historians proclaimed by him 15 years ago became a reality and is now enjoying growing influence.¹¹⁸ Although global labour history was merely a 'latecomer' that accompanied global history, today its networks are more firmly in place than those of its comprehensive counterpart, which are integrated into the institutions of academia exclusively. Undoubtedly, global labour historiography will not be able to do without its bases within the academic establishment either. But it is to be hoped that these bases do not become supporting pillars with the effect that global labour historiography is damaged by the mechanisms of competition and exclusion of the *Morbus Academicus*.

But what about the perspectives of the working classes internationally? It is justifiable to ask this concluding question for two reasons. Firstly, van der Linden is still in the middle of the programmatic, empirical and organisational creative process: his view is thus directed towards the future. Second, he asked himself this question over and again and made several attempts to answer it. In so doing it became clear to him that the workers' organisations, which even today are still trapped within the corsets of the nation state, only have future

117 Van der Linden 2002b, pp. 51–69; Mergner 2005.

118 Van der Linden 1997f, pp. 7–9; Van der Linden 2005b.

perspectives if they reinvent themselves on an international level.¹¹⁹ Only then will they have a chance of putting an end to the never-ending race between the tortoise and the hare and to confront the managers of the enterprises operating on a transcontinental level on an equal footing. In addition there are his hopes of globally networking the new social movements that came about in the course of the 1990s.¹²⁰ Are these hopes justified? Can the gap between the social movements of the Global South, which in 2008 condensed into transcontinental food riots, and the predominantly metropolitan Occupy movement, be bridged any time soon? And will these social movements in North and South succeed in closing ranks and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the internationalising workers' organisations? Nobody can conclusively answer these questions today. Yet the fact that we are even able to think about the possibility of such a 'movement of movements' is in no small part due to global labour history's networks and ways of thinking that were set in motion by Marcel van der Linden.

119 Van der Linden 2006a; Van der Linden 2003a, pp. 165 ff.

120 Van der Linden 2006b.

Marcel van der Linden: Publications, 1971–2014*

1 Books, Pamphlets and Special Journal Themes

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